Cultural Capital through Novels in English -
Is There One Sovereign Teaching Method when Teaching Novels in English?

Malin Larsson
Abstract

This thesis researches how six of the English teachers in the public upper-secondary schools in Växjö teach novels in English and how their methods influence the gaining of cultural capital for the students. The cultural capital theory is based on Pierre Bourdieu and what he states about cultural capital being one of the factors that may allow a person to shift social status without having any economic capital. Another matter that Bourdieu addresses is that school is one of the institutions where cultural capital may be gained (Bourdieu “Practical Reason” 19). Because school is the one common ground students have, it is the one place where they all have the same chance of developing, regardless of social status. The connection between gaining cultural capital and novels in English is explained with the theory of John Guillory and what he states about English novels being a part of cultural capital. The novels that the school possesses and uses form a school canon that does not only reflect the school’s values but its culture as well (Guillory 38). When the students read these novels they therefore gain the cultural capital that the school reflects. How well this cultural capital is gained depends on the teachers and their methods. The study has been conducted by interviewing two English teachers from each of the three schools about their methods and choice of novel. The analysis has uncovered that all the teachers have similar methods and the variations that exists depends on the students they have. Consequently the amount of knowledge and cultural capital gained by the students depends on what kind of students the teacher has and which method he/she therefore chooses to use.
# Table of Contents

## Abstract

## Introduction

1. Cultural Capital, Roles, and Expectations in the Classroom  
   1.1 Cultural Capital and Learning Theories  
   1.2 The Selection of Novels

2. Interviewing as Research Method

3. Teaching Literature  
   3.1 The Process of Choosing a Suitable Novel  
   3.2. The Teachers’ Teaching Methods  
   3.3. Reasons for Variation in Methods

## Conclusion

## Works Cited

## Appendix 1

## Appendix 2

## Appendix 3

## Appendix 4

## Appendix 5

## Appendix 6

## Appendix 7

## Appendix 8
Introduction

It is stated in the Swedish curriculum for the upper-secondary school that “The Education Act stipulates that education in each school form should be equivalent, irrespective of where in the country it is provided.” (Curriculum for the upper secondary school 2011 5; henceforth Curriculum). In the curriculum it is also indicated that even though the teaching should be equal it should not be the same. It should be designed to fit every student and his or her pre-existing knowledge and the program he or she is attending (Curriculum 5). Nevertheless, all students are graded by the same scale, which is also presented in the curriculum. With this in mind one may say that the goal is the same for every student and teacher in every subject but the means to get there are not specified. Still, all teachers do not grade the same so the difficulty level is different in all schools and every subject.

However, when it comes to teaching English, it is quite clear what it should include regarding language abilities and how they should be attained (Curriculum “English”). The purpose of learning English is not just to gain language abilities but to develop a deeper understanding of different cultures and the global life as well (Curriculum “English”). One might say that the students are supposed to gain cultural capital through their education. The theory of cultural capital in this thesis is based on Pierre Bourdieu’s theory about gaining cultural capital to gain social status. The connection between cultural capital and novels in English is explained by John Guillory and what he states about gaining cultural capital through literature. Bourdieu states that “the distribution of cultural capital is achieved in the relation between familial strategies and the specific logic of the school institution” (Bourdieu “Practical Reason” 19), i.e. the school is one of the locations where cultural capital is acquired. Novels in English are considered “‘authentic’ material” (Collie and Slater 3) that is to say they are not consciously written with the aim of teaching a language. Therefore, through novels the students come into contact with different cultures, a variety of characters
with different social backgrounds, and they may discover their own thoughts and feelings through understanding someone else’s (Collie and Slater 4). Since not all students get to visit other cultures, novels are their only way of getting into contact with different cultures (Collie and Slater 4) which is one important argument for the importance of teaching novels. Guillory states that cultural capital is created within the different social orders (Guillory 59) and because literature is a part of that cultural capital it is arguable that literature is a determining factor of what is agreeable to read in terms of gaining cultural capital to transfer between the different social rooms as Bourdieu labels it (Bourdieu “Practical Reason” 9). In this thesis culture is viewed as novels, plays, poetry, art, and music and what these cultural aspects mediate. The focus of this thesis is however on novels in English since not all teachers included in this thesis include poetry, plays, art, and music in their teaching of English literature.

It is the teachers’ responsibility to help the students find their place in society and gaining cultural capital and cultural understanding through novels is one way of doing it (Rosenblatt 121). Reading a lot of different novels helps the students gain cultural understanding and through that gain cultural capital. Novels in English are supposed to be included in the teaching (Curriculum “English”) and reading a lot of different novels helps the students gain cultural capital but even though the curriculum states that novels are to be used it does not denote that every school or every teacher include novels in English to the same extent or use the same methods. All teachers have their own method of teaching literature based on what kind of students they have and their own personal preferences when it comes to novels, their own cultural capital influences them. Furthermore, an important aspect to consider when it comes to teaching a second language is how students acquire a new language. If the teachers do not consider this as an important part when they choose their method, a great deal of knowledge may be lost. The aim of this thesis is therefore to find out
how the teachers’ methods of teaching novels in English vary in Swedish upper-secondary schools, what causes those variations, and how effective the methods are when it comes to gaining new knowledge and cultural capital. The teacher’s education, personal preferences when it comes to novels, the teachers’ comprehension of the students’ cultural capital, and the teachers’ teaching theories influence this.

Pierre Bourdieu’s theory about cultural capital and how it influences the teaching methods will be discussed in detail in the “Cultural Capital, Roles, and Expectations in the Classroom” chapter. A second topic that will be researched to some extent in this thesis is how the teachers choose the novels and how that connects with cultural capital. This is centred on what John Guillory states about the literary canon; that the works that the school chooses to use is a part of their – the students – forming social relations with culture and novels are therefore an important part of their cultural capital gaining (Guillory 56). A third subject that will be discussed in that chapter is theories on how students acquire language abilities, focusing on reading, based on Bo Lundahl’s book Engelsk Språkdidaktik [English Language Didactics]. The theory of behaviourism, Chomsky, and Krashen will be discussed when it comes to what influences the reader’s input, output, and cognitive abilities. This is important to consider when evaluating how the teachers teach since they have to be aware of how students learn a second language through reading and include that knowledge in their methods. The better the teachers can adapt their methods to how the students learn, the easier it is for the students to understand and gain cultural capital.

Since it is quite a large project to investigate how all of the English teachers teach in all of the schools in Sweden, this research has been narrowed down to the three public upper-
secondary schools in Växjö. Växjö is a medium sized city with more than 85 000 inhabitants (vaxjo.se, 2013) and will thus work as a cross section of the Swedish upper-secondary schools because the three public upper-secondary schools have roughly 3300 students (vaxjo.se, 2013) and offer different kind of educations. Therefore different kinds of students attend each school, both highly motivated students and students who are less motivated.

The research questions for this thesis are:

- What influences the teachers’ choice in literature; the students, their own personal preferences, which program the students are attending, which novel is popular, or all of the above?
- How do the teachers teach the literature? Which are their methods and how do they influence the gaining of cultural capital for the students?
- How and why do the methods vary between the teachers?

Since I want to research how English fiction is taught I go straight for the source: the teachers. Because this is a research thesis, interviewing is the best option as Daphne Keats states in her book Interviewing – a Practical guide for Students and Professionals (19). Since the focus is on what the teachers have to say classroom observation is not an option, nor are anonymous surveys. With the classroom observation approach the only thing attained is the observer’s point of view which is not the focus of this thesis. Surveys do get the teachers’ point of view but because anonymity is important – since it has to do with the teachers’ job – that is not an option. If further explanation is needed or the answers given are not sufficient it is difficult to track down the right teacher to ask them to elaborate on an anonymous survey. Therefore, this research has been carried out by interviewing the English teachers at the three schools, two teachers from each. To attain as reliable and valid answers to my questions as possible I have been clear about the purpose of the interview, to compare the English literature teaching methods between the three schools. This may have influenced the teachers
to modify their answers to sound better, which is one of the risks with this kind of comparative research and is one of the factors that are included in this research. I have followed what Raymond L. Gorden says in his book *Interviewing: Strategy, Techniques and Tactics* and Daphne M. Keats *Interviewing – a Practical Guide for Students and Professionals* about gaining information through interviewing which will be explained in the “Interviewing as Research Method” chapter.

The analysis part of this thesis will be divided into three sections, each section treating the different research questions. Although there might be some common traits between each teacher and their methods in teaching and choosing novels I will assess each teacher individually and end each section with a summary of what has been discussed about each individual teacher in relation with relevant material about teaching literature. The fact that some teachers might think alike is one trait I wish to lift and discuss further in the analysis, therefore there might be some repetition.

Previous research in this field in Sweden focuses, for example, on the novels, the students, what kind of literature the teachers use, how well the communication works in the classroom, one particular novel, and students’ literacy such as research by Susanne Bergdahl, “Reading on Equal terms? A Comparative Study of the Importance of Social Background and Cultural Capital in Vocational vs. University-preparatory English Training”, Emma Johansson’s “The School Canon: A Study about a Possible School Canon of English Literature at Swedish Upper-Secondary Schools”, Jenny Backlund’s “Fiction and the Syllabus – A Qualitative Study of the Teaching of Fiction as Related to the Syllabus for English in Swedish Junior High Schools”, Ulla Damber’s “Reading For Life: Three Studies of Swedish Students’ Literacy Development” and Ingrid Lundfeldt’s “Pushing Literacy Forward: How to Use the Novel Push in the English Language Classroom”. Other research and articles on an international level that belong to this field of research are for example focused on the history
of teaching English Literature, the impact of young adult literature in the classroom, critical reading, and which kind of literature that is suitable for today’s students such as Franklin E. Court’s “Adam Smith and the Teaching of English Literature”, Angela Beumer Johnson’s “Multiple Selves and Multiple Sites of Influence: Perceptions of Young Adult Literature in the Classroom”, Jennifer Leeman’s and Lisa Rabin’s “Reading Language: Critical perspectives for the Literature Classroom”, and Anthony Roy Mangione’s “Literature for Today’s Classrooms”. These dissertations and articles and my thesis all have English literature as the main focus. However, I have not found research nor articles that specifically focus on how the teachers’ methods of teaching literature influence the students’ knowledge gaining and gaining of cultural capital.
1. Cultural Capital, Roles, and Expectations in the Classroom

Sven Nilsson states in his book *Kulturens nya vägar* [Culture’s New Ways] that “we live in a differentiated society and culture is an important part in the distribution of power, prestige and influence. The social structures are embodied in different institutions but also through moral codes, patterns of behaviour, habits, language and way of thinking” (Nilsson 360). The distribution of power, prestige and influence is often not done consciously but is inherited. Classifying people is a constant event and we learn how to do this from the people we are surrounded by – parents, teachers, friends etc. – and it happens automatically. These classifications occur unconsciously and make us see society as something “meaningful, common and trivial” (Nilsson 361). When we classify people we automatically bestow them with certain qualities and therefore have different expectations of them (Bourdieu, “Practical Reason” 10). We assign them different capitals. According to Bourdieu, ‘capital’ may refer to economic capital or cultural capital.

In general terms it is possible to change your position within society, either by gaining economic or cultural capital, and by this you change social ‘rooms’ as Bourdieu labels it (Bourdieu, “Practical Reason” 9). Bourdieu states that people in the top rooms do not often go well together with people in the lower rooms. They would not understand each other because of different tastes and traits. People in the same room does therefore more easily form a group (Bourdieu, “Practical Reason” 10). The people in the top room are usually represented by people with a great deal of economic capital but people with a lot of cultural capital, as well as people with a lot of economic capital, constitute the top room. This room is the elite of the society (Nilsson 361). The connection between social background elements and cultural habits has been the focus of many studies in Sweden since the 1960’s (Nilsson

---

3 Translated from Swedish. All translations from Sven Nilsson’s book are my own.
This is something that Bourdieu researches in his book *Distinction – a Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (1984). The result showed that the higher the income and education, the more cultural capital and the higher the room you belong to (Bourdieu, “Distinction” 120).

School works in a similar way where the teachers symbolise the elite in comparison to the students. They possess a whole lot of cultural capital compared to the students, the teachers have read more novels and have a higher education than the students. Even the students get divided into different ‘rooms’, not due to their economic capital but due to different academic qualities. The students with high grades end up in more advanced classes and those with low grades in less advanced classes – more often than not. Through this they do not get any interaction with students from different social ‘rooms’. Bourdieu compares this selection to a physicist’s – Maxwell’s – explanation of the second law of thermodynamics. A demon selects the hottest molecules and puts them in the same container – where the temperature rises – and the slower molecules in another container – where the temperature falls. The demon therefore maintains the order that otherwise would have been undone (Bourdieu, “Practical Reason” 20). Comparing this to the school system with its tests and grading one may say that students in advanced classes – the hot molecules – can develop due to their fellow students and the students in less advanced classes cannot. If a student ends up in a class with like-minded students it is difficult to evolve – or change rooms – with their help since they are in the same room. The advanced students, like the hot molecules, have an easier time developing since they are prone to move forward and evolve since they are often more motivated. The teachers play the main part of helping students advance and gain knowledge. The students may use each other in order to understand a novel but it is a teacher’s task “of leading the students toward a fuller participation in what the text offers” (Rosenblatt 74). What is to be included in the English teaching is decided by the teachers, who follow the curriculum, and cultural capital is decided by the elite that are – in school –
represented by the teachers, i.e. the teachers choose what kind of cultural capital the students are supposed to gain by choosing the novel. However, the teachers are controlled by a number of things; economic funds, politics, the school board, media, etc. If the school does not have the economic funds to purchase books, arrange field trips to see theatre, art, or to go to book fairs the students are limited in their gaining of cultural capital. Since we inherit our way of thinking from – among others – parents they play a huge part in how motivated the students are and therefore in which class and which upper-secondary school the student ends up in. How motivated the students are is visible in their grades – the higher the grade, the more motivated student – and these students tend to apply for similar upper-secondary school programs. Like the molecules they are divided into groups with similar students. The importance of reading is different in each student’s home which contributes to the student’s reading ability in school. The school therefore has the important task to meet each student at their level of reading and not assign too complicated novels (Lundahl 196) and yet follow the knowledge requirements of each English level, a difficult task because of the different students in each class. Students, teachers, parents, in reality the whole society has preconceptions about each program depending on the grade. Which kind of program the students chooses may depend on their social background and their parents’ education but their result depends on themselves and their teacher. What they learn in school is an important part of their socialisation and it is the teachers that transfer their knowledge onto the students (Brophy 34 - 35). It is therefore important that the teachers are aware of their methods, how language is acquired, and their own cultural capital because what they do in the classroom affects the students.

Through education one can change social rooms (Nilsson 362). One part of the schools’ assignments is to socialize the students and transfer its democratic values onto them, teaching them the importance of equality, diversity, and acceptance (Curriculum 4) and yet
the educational system is built upon dividing the students into groups. This is not avoidable since it is not possible to have all students in the same class. A part of this socialization is to encourage the students to not only learn the democratic values and become functioning members of society but also to elaborate these values and create something new (Aspelin 66), to educate themselves and grow.

Belonging to a school or a certain program is a process of identification – people refer to you by what you are studying or where you study – and with this assumptions follow (Bourdieu “Practical Reason” 16). The classifying that we do can also be interpreted as we give each person a role to play because of the presumptions we have about them; it is a part of the structuring that we do. In addition to the roles that we give other people we also take on a role (Illman and Nynäs 111). The expectations the teacher has on the students as well as the expectations the students have on the teacher differ (De Swaan 37). A joint basis is however that the teacher is there to help the students gain knowledge and the students are there to learn. How the teachers perceive the students depends on the teachers’ cultural capital and vice versa since “presumptions are contingent on culture”⁴ (Lundahl 197) i.e. one’s presumptions emanates from how much cultural understanding one possesses. A teacher’s job is to disregard their own assumptions about the programs and to meet every student on the student’s level. If the teacher is set in his/her way of treating students from the, for example, vehicle program, the teacher will probably hold the good students back because he/she is not aware of each individual student as the curriculum states that each teacher should be (Curriculum 5). Being aware of the students’ abilities is a main part of the teacher’s role since “potential levels of success depend not only on the difficulty of the task itself, but also on the degree to which you prepare students through advance structuring and scaffold their learning efforts through instruction, guidance and feedback” (Brophy 54).

⁴ Translated from Swedish
The relationship between the teacher role and the student role is based on power. If anyone in a relationship is dependent on the other a power configuration arises (De Swaan 43). The teacher has the power over the student because the student is dependent on the teacher to get good grades that may decide the whole future for that student. The teacher is also dependent on the students to behave and to show up to classes. Something else that the teacher is dependent on is the curriculum and school management. Every one of these relationships is dependent on the balance of power (De Swaan 44). Because of this balance of power it is important that the teacher is aware of what the chosen novel may mediate when it comes to cultural understanding and how the students may perceive it as well as how well the method of working with it conveys the content. It is the teachers’ responsibility as the school's elite to choose a suitable novel and method.

Even though these presumptions and roles exist the teacher is supposed to base his/her teaching upon the individual students and to encourage the students to strengthen their abilities on their own (Aspelin 69). Within the English subject one can interpret this as the students may choose what to read themselves since they are supposed to grow individually when in fact the teacher decides what they are supposed to read. Of course, there is always the risk that if the students get to choose novels by themselves they do not choose something that is challenging them but instead they choose something easy just to get it over with. Here the teacher plays an important part. It is up to the teacher to choose novels that suit the students, challenge them, and that can help them develop (Curriculum “English”).
1.2 Cultural Capital and Learning Theories

There are several ways of regarding how students learn a second language. According to the theory of behaviourism it happens “through imitation, practice, social reinforcement, and habit formation” (Lundahl 146). The student acquires new knowledge through stimuli that the student – with positive support from the teacher – responds to and uses. Social environment and the amount of input are important. It is up to the teacher to adjust the amount of input to the students and to correct mistakes immediately (146), similar to how a baby imitates its parents trying to form a word, students imitate what they see in school and forms a habit due to social reinforcement. Based on how a student is introduced to novels he/she forms a certain way of working with them, imitating what the teacher does when he/she demonstrates approaches to them, retaining a certain study habit and sustaining that method if it is not challenged or developed. This influences how well a student gains new knowledge and cultural capital since the method determines the knowledge gained. If the students are not challenged they may do the tasks they are presented to out of pure habit without reflecting over what they are doing and because of that they do not gain new knowledge in the form of new cultural understanding.

Another theory of how students learn is Noam Chomsky’s theory on hereditary language ability. He explains it as an instinct, something that one is born with (Chomsky 10). Chomsky does, however, separate competence and language usage and does not consider social factors (Chomsky 10). According to Chomsky’s theory the inherited language ability is precipitated when the student gets input through reading. The input therefore does not matter as much as the inherited ability (Chomsky 12). Chomsky’s statement regarding input is something that has been refuted with a model that Stephen Krashen introduced at the end of the 1970’s (Lundahl 149). According to that model the input and the student’s natural “Language Acquisition Device” (Krashen 39) determines the student’s language development.
Arguably, the amount of input is also important for how much cultural capital the student may gain. If the student is exposed to too much input the risk is that the student does not acquire any knowledge of any kind. This is an important aspect for the teacher to consider. Krashen also differentiates between natural acquisition and learning. Natural acquisition is focused on communication while learning is a conscious process, “knowing the rules” (Krashen 18) such as grammar and vocabulary. He moreover states that when the teaching is focused on anything else than communication – for example grammar – the learning process is not natural. What the student learns during that process cannot be used naturally, only when the student has enough time to prepare (20).

Another important thing that affects the student’s cultural capital acquisition is the emotive filter each student has. It is important that the students are motivated and that the environment is positive without stress and negative attitudes (Krashen 21). One may argue that stress and negative attitudes are not just things that exist in the school environment but in the students’ home environment as well. If the student is stressed or has a negative environment at home or at school it hinders his or her language acquisition. Lundahl does, however, argue against Krashen’s model. Some of the most important points that Lundahl mentions are that Krashen does not consider understanding the same as language learning and that learning and acquisition are not two different things but rather parts of the continuum (Lundahl 150).

The theory of behaviourism, Krashen’s model and Chomsky’s theory have led up to the ones of today. One of those is the cognitive perspective. It focuses on “learning, memorisation, perception, thinking, metacognition, and problem solving” (Lundahl 151). According to the cognitive model there are three factors that are important: input, intake and output. The connection between the mental process and social environment are important and dependent on each other. Jean Piaget’s theory about different stages of a child’s development
in correlation with a cognitive perspective (Piaget 4, 17) has been important in research about development, how the child’s learning moves from the simpler to the more difficult (Lundahl 151). This is why the novels that the teachers choose to teach are supposed to challenge the students but at the same time cannot be too difficult for the students to comprehend, the novels have to have a familiar theme for the students on one level in order for them to comprehend the context of it. According to the cognitive model a student reads a text bottom up or top down. In the bottom up model the reader decodes the smallest components of the language first – the letter and the words – to form a comprehensive story. In the top down model it is the reader’s abilities, presumptions, and experiences that determines the reader’s ability to comprehend a text. Studies have shown that both models must be combined in order to decode a text properly (176). Louise Rosenblatt states in her book *Literature as Exploration* that a text can be read with two purposes; to answer questions given about the text, i.e. gathering information, or focus more on the meaning of the text. She calls these two approaches the efferent stance and the aesthetic stance (Rosenblatt 292). Much like the bottom up and top down methods both the efferent and the aesthetic stance are important in order to fully comprehend a novel. According to Robert Scholes there are three ‘levels’ of comprehending a text; first step is reading the text which is both a skill and a knowledge, to be able to decode the text to fully understand it. Second step is interpretation. This step depends on the reader’s skill. If that fails, this step cannot be achieved. The interpretation comes from the reader’s desire to decode an eventual underlying meaning of the text. The last step is the criticism of the text and this has to do with the reader’s taste as well as the reader’s ability to properly decode and interpret the text (Scholes 21-24). Both step two and three depend on the steps before. If the student lacks the skill of reading the text he or she will not understand it, is not able to interpret the text, and is therefore not able to acquire any cultural
capital. It is thus important that the teacher helps the student with his or her reading ability before the teacher moves on to any deeper understanding of the novel.

Elizabeth Bernhardt presents variables that affect the student’s reading process in her book *Understanding Advanced Second-Language Reading* (44-62) that Lundahl puts into a model:

The reader: Background knowledge and knowledge about the material, knowledge about the surrounding world, language ability, knowledge about and experience of textual types, cultural based opinions and values, attitudes, motivation and interest, purpose, reading ability in the native language, earlier reading experiences, strategic ability, and meta linguistic and meta cognitive competence. (Lundahl 180).

The model for the text consists of: “Content, abstract level, textual type, textual structure, vocabulary, sentence structure, typography, amount of text, verbal and non-verbal information (pictures, figures, charts), medium (book, magazine, TV, movie, computer etc.)” (180). How these variables interact in each student’s case is impossible to determine in a school situation. It is, however, the teachers’ job to overcome possible difficulties that the students might encounter because they lack some ability or presuppositions.

1.3 The Selection of Novels

As a teacher with influence over a number of students it is important to follow the curriculum and to form the teaching to fit each student. When it comes to the subject of English and teaching novels in English the teacher decides what the students should read and how many novels that should be included in the course. When choosing a text a teacher must consider “their [the students’] emotional and intellectual maturity and their interests and hobbies” (Lazar 52). Since it is impossible to choose a text that suits everyone the teacher has to choose a text that fits the majority of the students. There are several criteria to consider in choosing
the right text beyond the students’ interests, hobbies, and program; their cultural background, linguistic proficiency, and literary background (Lazar 53, 54). When considering their cultural background it is important to know if it will help them or make it more difficult for them to understand the novel. How well developed the students’ language proficiency is, is the second thing to consider. Therefore it is important to choose a novel that does not have a too advanced and unfamiliar language but is still challenging enough so that the students learn something. The third thing to consider is how much the students have read beforehand, both in English and in their own language, since it is easier to grasp a novel’s structure and length if they have encountered texts before (Lazar 53, 54).

The teachers included in this thesis have lists of books at each of the different schools to choose from that has been constructed over a number of years by previous and existing teachers and the lists constantly change. The novels on the lists are, however, chosen for the same reasons – to fit the students, the English level they are at, and the programs that the school provides. The novels that are on the lists do, however, have some things in common; they are a part of a school canon. What is to be included on that canon has always been debated and recently even more so (Guillory 3). Although Guillory claims that the novels that the school possesses reflect the school’s values and culture, Dean E. Kolbas thinks otherwise. He indicates that the novels on that list do not reflect the social identity of the school that possesses it (Kolbas 56), i.e. the school’s social values, moral, and culture are not determined by the kind of novels it has on its literary canon. One might argue that both are right. On one hand the school canon does not mirror the school’s moral, values, and culture since it is the teachers, not the school, that determines which books are to be included on the literary canon. On the other hand it is the school that hires said teachers and therefore the teachers and the values that they possess are approved by the school and consequently the teachers reflect the school’s values, moral, and culture.
Guillory states that “By defining canonicity as determined by the social identity of the author, the current critique of the canon both discovers, and misrepresents, the obvious fact that the older the literature, the less likely it will be that texts by socially defined minorities exist in sufficient numbers to reduce a ‘representative’ canon” (Guillory 15). This is visible in the schools’ canon since there is not a lot of older literature though some are considered classics and have been a part of the school canon for many years. He also states that “the selection of texts is the selection of values” (23). Since the school is supposed to provide the students with a wide range of different cultures and values (Curriculum 4-6) it is important that the novels reflect that duty. One determining factor is that if the school does not have the funds to buy new books or a lot of them, the school is lacking power in the literary field, it does not have the economic capital to invest in new books to the canon. That is one of the things that determine the school’s ability to gain cultural capital; through new books in the field (Bourdieu, “The Rules of Art” 215). It is important for the schools to have the economical ability to purchase new novels since schools are one of the main institutions that create and preserve a canon (Kolbas 59). This process is a reproduction of social relations by distributing knowledge. “Individual works are taken up into this system . . . and confront their receptors first as canonical, as cultural capital” (Guillory 56). The school’s job is to distribute knowledge and create a relation to culture, in this case through novels. How the novels are perceived depends on the students and how the teachers handle the novel as well as the students’ abilities.

The schools included in this thesis have some books in common, among others Of Mice and Men by John Steinbeck and Animal Farm by George Orwell for English 6 students. These two books do not only fit the curriculum very well considering the third point in the central content concerning "living conditions, attitudes, values, traditions, society issues and cultural, historical, political and social conditions” (Curriculum “English”), they are also
examples of novels that have been a part of the canon for quite some time. It is first and foremost the school that specifies the value of a novel related to “the social functions and institutional aims of the school itself” and when it is a part of its canon it becomes a part of the school’s cultural capital (Guillory 269). *Animal Farm* is a political novel that depicts the Russian revolution in 1917 by having farm animals represent the main characters Stalin, Lenin and Trotsky, and the events that occurred. Since it is the school and the teachers that control the canon and the novels that are to be included they control the cultural capital that the students are exposed to (Guillory 269). The novels that are to be included in the canon are not only judged on their moral or social values but also their aesthetics (Guillory 270) i.e. the taste in novels influences the teachers’ choice in novels. *Animal Farm* fits a school canon not only because of its clear connection with the central content in the curriculum concerning what is stated about the content of the teaching should fit the program the students are attending and *Animal Farm* fits students that are attending Social Studies, but also because of the way it is written. It uses allegory and because of that it is suitable for the English 6 course where the students are supposed to handle more complicated texts (Curriculum “English”). *Of Mice and Men* is a novel that introduces the students to a different kind of culture than they are used to since it is set in a different country and the characters have different living conditions than the students. The language is a bit different from what the students may be used to since it includes colloquial speech which can be difficult to understand if the students are not familiar with reading texts and the English language. The content is also suitable for a novel on a school canon. Since “cultural works are not so much the sum of the values they express as the effective transcendence of them” (Guillory 270) it is important that a novel on a school canon is easy enough for the students to comprehend but advanced and different enough concerning culture for the students to gain new cultural knowledge from. It is not important what kind of values the novel expresses as the method the teacher uses is. The
method should allow the students to understand the values expressed. If a school is too judgmental in its selection of canonical novels it will restrict the students’ opportunity to gain cultural capital and they oppose the assignment given to them – to promote the students’ knowledge about the world (Curriculum 4).

2. Interviewing as Research Method

The reason for the method being interviewing for this thesis instead of, for example, classroom observation or anonymous surveys, is because of the answers needed. Classroom participation, for one, needs permission from the school and teacher and requires the observer to be there for a whole assignment which may take months when it comes to teaching literature. This has to be done with all teachers. Classroom observation would only give the observer’s point of view and take a lot of time. It could be followed up by questions to the teachers about their teaching but it is more effective to go straight to the source – the teachers (Keats 72). The answers in an anonymous survey may need some elaboration and that is easier to attain when interviewing a person by follow-up questions. The teachers participating in this research are anonymous and it would be difficult tracking down the right teacher to get further information with anonymous surveys. Therefore interviews are the best option for this particular type of research because then the answers needed will be attained straight from the source, from the teacher’s point of view, not from how the observer perceived it or from inconclusive survey answers (Keats 72).

When interviewing one must consider the subjects’ credibility, reliability and validity (Gorden 4). In this research where the three schools’ English teaching are being contrasted it is possible that the teachers might overreact and make their teaching appear better or worse than it is because they feel threatened, they might keep something from the interview (Gorden 118). This is important to have in mind since it is their jobs that are being researched. This is
something that has been considered during these interviews but the information gained from them are being treated as truths since the purpose of the interviews has been clear throughout the process and the same questions have been used for each of the six subjects. A second risk is that the interviewer interject his/her own opinions in the questions and/or follow up questions, making the interviewees say what the interviewer wants them to say (Gorden 134). This is something that I as the interviewer in this research has been aware of and have avoided. A third risk is that there has been any misunderstandings about the questions. This has been avoided by having the interviewee read through the questions with me before the interview.  

The purpose of these interviews has not been to change the teachers’ mind about teaching, it has been about gathering information about how they do their work. The interviews are therefore research interviews (Keats 7), intended to gain data. The interviews can also be considered to be guided since the teachers had specific questions to answer and we “worked through them together” (Keats 17).

The strategy used for this research has been to design questions that will get me the information that I need and in the teachers own words. The questions are therefore open-ended (Keats 35), they are not given any alternatives and are free to reply as they want. It is also important to find a reasonable amount of English teachers to interview; in this case six English teachers, two from each school, because each school had at least two English teachers that were willing to do an interview. Since the purpose of this thesis is to find out how novels in English are taught in the three public upper-secondary schools in Växjö and why it is taught that way it is important that the interviewees teach English, of course, and that they do it on a daily basis. Also that they have the same English course or courses, in this case English 6 (former known as English B).

---

5 The questions are available in appendix 1.
When interviewing anyone about a specific subject it is important that the interviewer knows what he/she is talking about (Gorden 136). I therefore close-read the curriculum, especially the part about the English subject. It is important to consider the way I look and speak when interviewing in order to gain confidence from the interviewee (Gorden 127). Since I have been interviewing upper-secondary school English teachers that differ in manners and looks it has not been a main focus of the interviews. I have been paying attention during the interview as to how familiar I could be with each interviewee and adapted my behaviour accordingly. However, the first impression is important (Keats 22) and I have therefore done my best in showing up on time and being agreeable so that the interviewee is comfortable, another thing that is important (Gorden 154). I have also adjusted the time to when the interviewees were available and decided that we could meet at their workplace. Doing the interview at their workplace gives them access to the material they are talking about during the interview and the advantage to be where they are most comfortable. They usually feel more powerful at a place which they are familiar with (Gorden 155). Since the subject of the interviews has not been of a sensitive type that could evoke strong feelings I have not had any problems with empathy, sympathy or a judgmental attitude, some of the things one must consider when interviewing (Keats 26).

For the reason that the interview subjects are active teachers and that the questions are about how they do their work it is important to keep the handling of the material ethical and anonymous. Anonymity is most often used when interviewing for research (Keats 28, 29). Since this thesis will be open to the public there is a risk that someone at their school may read it and get the teacher in trouble if they do not like what they read. I have been well aware of this fact and therefore I have kept their names out of the transcriptions even though they themselves mentioned them. However, because I am comparing the three public upper-secondary schools in Växjö and there only are three public ones, I could not exclude the
names of the schools. When it comes to the care of records they are kept at my computer as audio files and documents that only I have access to. It is important that confidential material is kept in a way so that only the researcher, or those who handle the research, can access it (Keats 31).

In order for me to be fully concentrated on what the interviewee said I recorded the interviews. This allowed me to listen to the interviewee and the interview had a more natural flow without interruptions of me having to write down what was said. Of course, extra time had to be put into transcribing the interviews, which are visible in Appendixes 3-8. The interviews were conducted in English to eliminate extra time to translate all the interviews as well. When transcribing it is important to write down exactly what is said (Gorden 179), otherwise it is considered tampering with information. However, any grammatical mistakes have not been corrected, the information is written down exactly the way it was said during the interview. I have also asked if it was acceptable that I use a recorder and that the interview may take 30-40 minutes. This is important because not all are comfortable with being recorded and they need to know how long the interview may take (Keats 49).

Every step of an interview is important to consider from initial contact to how the process is concluded (Keats 48-50). In this case the initiated contact was by email, both straight to the teacher and through the schools. I have presented myself as a teacher trainee doing my final thesis on how English literature is taught in the public upper-secondary schools, if there are any differences between the methods that the teachers use, and that I would like to do an interview with them, the teachers, on how they teach novels in English. It is especially important to be frank about the purpose of the interviews and who is doing them because I am a student and that they will be part of a research that they may or may not benefit from (Keats 48). After the interviews I have had email contact with each teacher about
further questions and thanking them for participating. All interviews were concluded in an optimistic manner.

As the interviews where intended for research it has been important that the questions were relevant (Keats 49). The stating of the course that they teach is important so that I know that all teachers have some common ground. It is not relevant to compare teachers that teach different courses. The common ground for these teachers is English 6. The background information is relevant because of the need to know the difference between the teachers’ education, origin, and experience to see if there are any connections between those and their teaching and attitude towards teaching. Because the focus of this thesis is not on the teachers’ background it is not discussed to the same extent as their methods. Questions two through five are to find out how they choose and work with novels since that is the aim of this thesis. Question six is to find out if they have done a conscious choice of a didactic theory or theories. After evaluating the interviews the answers to question six display that further explanation was needed about what I meant with didactic theories and that that would have given better answers. The last question is to find out if the teachers think that they get enough opportunities to expand their knowledge and what they think of that to establish their attitude towards developing their methods with new ideas.
3. Teaching Literature

All but two teachers originate from the Växjö area. The two who do not are from Gothenburg and Great Britain. They are also those with the highest education and work at Katedral, the school with the most academically oriented programs with academic classes. However, one of them does not yet have a completed teacher education but a Ph.D. in English literature, which he attained from Gothenburg University, and was hired on that merit. The other four studied at Växjö College, now known as Linnaeus University. The age of the teachers range from 34 years old to 63 years old and their experience vary from 5-24 years. All but one teacher chose to become an English teacher. The one that did not choose it from the beginning picked up the subject since it was not enough work as a one subject teacher and he chose to be an English teacher as well. When it comes to the teachers choosing school it varied between choosing the school because of its academic programs or simply just because there was a job opening. Three out of these six teachers have a teacher’s licence, one is still awaiting an answer two years after she applied. Only one of the schools, Katedral, requires one.

3.1. The Process of Choosing a Suitable Novel

The process of choosing a suitable novel for the class the teacher is teaching starts with considering three things; which course he/she is teaching – in this case English 5, 6 or 7 –, what kind of students he/she is having, and which kind of novel that suits both of the above (Lazar 48). As mentioned before the teacher may also consider which kind of program the students are attending and choose a novel with a theme that suits that particular program (Curriculum “English”), for example Animal Farm for a Social Studies class since the theme is – among others – politics and social relations.

Teacher A is very aware and concerned about the novel fitting the particular class that he is having (Appendix 3), not only their level of English but the program as well. He has
students from the more academic programs so the content is important according to him. He prioritises the text as a language resource but he also focuses on literary analysis and cultural understandings, more so in course 6 than in course 5. If he experiences a problem with a novel, for example when he chose *The No 1 Lady’s Detective Agency* by Alexander McCall Smith for an English 5 class and it turned out to be too advanced, he does not write the novel off to not fit that level but rather that it did not fit that particular class of students (Appendix 3). He is aware of the difference between a novel suiting a particular class rather than a particular level of English. If he encounters a student that cannot handle the novel he has chosen he would offer the student an easier novel since it is more important that the student read than that the student read a specific novel (E-mail.). The fact that he is concerned about the students reading a novel and gaining some cultural understanding from it, instead of them reading a particular novel, indicates that he is aware of and prioritises the students’ understanding of the novel. When understanding a novel the students gain some cultural capital in terms of learning about others, their culture, and experiences through reading. He also thinks that with each problem comes an opportunity to develop his method in teaching that particular novel. He thinks that it becomes easier to choose a novel for the class if you have had the students for one term.

Teacher B is also concerned about which class she has but also her own personal interest, if she wants to try something new, or depend on something she has done. She is focused on the language of the text, it cannot be too challenging since she wants the students to manage reading the whole novel since she has students that are not used to reading. The novel has to be exciting and captivate the students from the beginning, otherwise they usually just do not read it (Appendix 4). She does not only choose a novel depending on the content, it also has to fit the certain level of English the students are at as well as if they are going to do course 6. She does not give the same novel to a class that is just doing course 5. She
differentiates between students from certain programs, choosing an easier novel for the students in less academic programs that are not going to take the more advanced courses in English. She also focuses on the class itself; if they are just boys or just girls or a mixed class. She also likes to get to know the class before she chooses a book (E-mail). She tries to choose a novel from the students’ perspective. She is conscious about the fact that the students’ background and personal experience influence how they might receive a novel. If she encounters a problem with the novel during the reading she does her best in working her way through it. The problem is usually about whether or not the students read it and if they like it, not their understanding of it (Appendix 4).

Teacher C is concerned about the length of the book, if it is difficult to read, and if it inspires him because he thinks it is easier to teach a book that he knows and likes (Appendix 5). This implies that he is not that concerned about the students’ abilities and the fact that even though a novel might be short it does not mean that it is easier, for example, Of Mice and Men and Animal Farm. Both books are not over 130 pages and they are considered English 6 material according to the list of novels they have at his school. He does not adapt the novel to which program the students are attending (E-mail), he adapts his teaching in other ways which were not apparent during the interview. He also chooses novels from the English 5 list that the school has and focuses mainly on vocabulary and reading ability. If he encounters a student that is too advanced for the novel he gives him/her another book to read.

Teacher D has students from classes that are not so motivated, i.e. from programs that are less academic, and therefore she tries to choose novels that the students might relate to and that are interesting to keep their interest (Appendix 6). She focuses on choosing a novel that suits the class but also the program that the class is attending. She focuses mainly on content, that the novel is interesting enough to keep the students’ interest, on gaining language abilities, and that the novel is easy enough for them to finish since they do not read that often.
If she has a problem with a student not handling the novel she tries to find alternative titles but she thinks that if a student cannot handle a simple novel, he/she will not pass the course (E-mail). If a student is more advanced she gives them extra challenges, if there is time.

Teacher E’s students are from the Social Studies program with Behaviour Science orientation so in general they are good at English. She has the level of language in mind when she chooses a novel and how many copies of the book there are since she wants every student to have a copy (Appendix 7). She also thinks about the content, it has to captivate the students right away. She focuses on having the students read a whole novel as well as gaining language abilities and understanding the novel. She wants the students to broaden their mind so the novel has to be a bit of a challenge for them.

Teacher F teaches English at the IB program [International Baccalaureate] so her students are more advanced and motivated. She chooses the novels depending on the students’ previous reading experiences. She has them do a survey in the beginning to find out what they have read and what they like and to find out how they learn best (Appendix 8). She thinks about the content and context of the novels, the language, and what kind of activities she can do with the novel since she includes a lot of creative work in her teaching. Working creatively with a novel suggests that the student has to know and understand what he/she is reading in order to create something new that connects with what has been read. The student needs a deeper understanding of the text and therefore has an easier time to gain new cultural understanding and acquire cultural capital in the form of a deeper understanding of the novel. She has not yet come across a student that could not handle a novel but if she would, she would address the difficulties, look at the student’s learning style and adjust the assignments accordingly, and collaborate with learning support staff and mentor. If she has a more advanced student she assigns more challenging tasks as well as emphasise literary history and theories, and encourage more analytical work (E-mail).
All of the teachers are aware of the fact that they can choose a novel that suits the program the students are attending. Teacher C chooses to disregard that and include the program in other activities in his English teaching. Since the curriculum does not state that the novel that the teacher chooses has to deal with which program the students are attending, they do not have to choose a novel that suits the program (Curriculum “English”). All of the teachers are also aware of the importance of having the novel suit the particular students they are teaching but Teacher F is the only one that actually does something to find out about the students’ previous experience with novels by having them do a survey about their previous experience with novels. Her method makes it easier for her to choose a novel that fits not just the level of English she is teaching but the students as well, something that Lundahl emphasises through the model he produced from Bernhardt’s book (Lundahl 180). Teacher C is the only teacher that does not consider what his students may like and chooses a novel that he likes and knows best. Arguably, one might say that similar to Chomsky, Teacher C does not consider social factors when it comes to choosing a suitable novel for his students other than it should suit the level of English the students are at. The better a novel suits the students when it comes to difficulty and content, the more the students are likely to acquire cultural capital through intercultural knowledge because, arguably, interest sparks knowledge.

Another matter that all of the teachers have in common is the thought of just having the students read. The teachers included in this survey are concerned about the students’ reading abilities regardless of which level of English they teach. This suggests that it is not as important for the teachers to have the students read advanced novels as it is just to read which further suggests that the ability of reading is more important than gaining new knowledge from the novels.
3.2 The Teachers’ Teaching Methods

It is one thing to choose a novel that may suit and interest the students, another is to keep their interest and motivate them to keep reading it and doing the tasks assigned to it. To do this the teachers have to design their assignments and methods so that they are meaningful and relevant for the students’ development of existing knowledge and skills (Brophy 214). Some things that may help in motivating the students are to set goals, give feedback, show that the students are developing, and recognise their efforts (Brophy 55-61).

Teacher A focuses on the language abilities that the students may acquire from the novel but he also goes deeper than just textual structure with analysis and intercultural understanding of the text (Appendix 3). An important part of the process of teaching a novel is how the novel is presented. If this is done in an interesting way it will spark the students’ interest and curiosity to read the novel (Collie and Slater 16). Teacher A begins by showing the students the structures of the text which is a linguistic approach (Lazar 31) which is similar to the lexical approach which focuses on words and word combinations (Richards and Rodgers 132). Teacher A starts off by exposing the students to textual structure by having them do a pre-reading activity. He takes a couple of words or phrases from the first page of the novel, copies them, cuts them up into small pieces and gives the different groups the cut up words and phrases and asks the students to put the words and phrases back together into a coherent story. The result is a range of different stories that shows Teacher A how well the students understand textual structure and how well they put together a coherent story. This method can help the students build up an image or an idea about what the novel is about (Collie and Slater 20). However, this does not function as a method to use on a whole novel because to fully understand and appreciate a novel one must consider the whole story, but as a pre-reading method it works since it makes the students aware of the different ways parts of the text can be interpreted. He also talks about the title, what the students think that the novel
is about based on the title. He then proceeds and ends the novel with literary criticism and analysis. He combines the linguistic aspect as well as the understanding and interpretation of the novel by having the students discuss questions in groups and a writing assignment. Having students work together is a cooperative learning method and involves cooperating activities such as group discussions (Richards and Rodgers 192). This is an old approach dating back to John Dewey who is considered to be the one that presented the method into regular classrooms (Richards and Rodgers 192). Through this method the students share their own opinions about the novel and therefore get different point of views about the material. Because the educational system is built upon dividing students into different groups the students with the same cultural capital tend to end up in the same groups (Bourdieu “Practical Reason 20) but it does not mean that they interpret each novel the same. Through group discussions about the novels they get each other’s view on the novel and therefore share their cultural capital and develop their already existing capital. How the students understand the differences and other cultures depends on their already existing values and experiences (Lundahl 193). The fact that he ends his work with the novel with a written assignment about the content suggests that he has a content based task in the end. The focus of this method is not only to look at the structure of the text that is produced by the student but also the content of what the student has written, the students are not solely graded on their language skills (Richards and Rodgers 204). With this method Teacher A is able to not only grade the students’ language but also the level of knowledge gained. Teacher A organises his courses so that in English 5 the students are supposed to read the novel at home to a certain page and discuss the questions A has prepared during classes. In English 6 and 7 the students are responsible for reading the whole thing on their own and the questions are more of a study guide to help them with the final written assignment. Since he also focuses on cultures and
Teacher B focuses more on the process of reading. This method is called whole language and focuses on the skills of reading and writing, in this case reading (Richards and Rodgers 108). Polishing the reading skill is the first of the three steps that was mentioned before by Scholes. During the time of the interview she had just started with two new novels allowing the students to choose one of them. She presents the novels and what they are about, the students choose, and then they proceed to read. She gives the students 15-20 minutes each class to read which she feels calms the class down and they get more work done. She too has questions that the class is supposed to work with during class and at home. Her questions are about the text to see if the students comprehend the text and if they read the novel which puts the focus on the text entirely. She allows the students to read during class, she gives them the opportunity to better get started with reading a longer text. Most students may have a difficult time concentrating on reading in school (Lundahl 211) but since Teacher B has the whole class be quiet and read she creates a quiet and calm environment for the students to read in. Because she presents the class with two novels that they may choose between, they have some say in what they read. Teacher B too includes group discussions and therefore she also uses the cooperative language method (Richards and Rodgers 192) with the same outcome prerequisites. She does not include analysis in her teaching of English 5. Since Teacher B has students from programs that are not study motivated and might not continue with taking the English 6 course she focuses on their reading ability. As Teacher B is concerned with her students’ reading ability, the whole language method is a good method to use and many of her students have not read a book before they come to upper-secondary school. The students’ lack of reading obstructs their ability to work with a text in a more advanced way that might be expected in English 5 and 6.
Teacher C presents the novel by reading through the first chapter while the students listen and follow along in the text. He then proceeds by letting the students read by themselves and answer questions about the novel in a study manual he has put together that the students work individually with. That helps them with remembering the plot and might be a good motivation technique for the students to pay closer attention to what is happening in the text. The study manual function as support for the students which is important for inexperienced readers (Lundahl 206). However, these questions must be formed in a way so that the student cannot just give the ‘right’ answer or that the answer is to be found in the text. They should consist of right-or-wrong answers as well as asking for interpretation (Collie and Slater 38). Most of the questions are designed to find simple answers that can be found in the text and a few are interpretative ones. These questions are the ones that may contribute to the students’ cultural capital gaining, but since he has the students do them individually they do not get to interact with other students and discuss the novel which is important in order to develop their capital even more (Bourdieu “Practical Reason” 20). He has a lexical approach to the text since he focuses on vocabulary (Richards and Rodgers 132). He makes a wordlist of words that the students may not know and then asks them to put the words into sentences or translate them in the final test. To be able to do this task the students have to read the text in order to understand the words on the wordlist in context (Collie and Slater 43). Since Teacher C, too, has weaker students he does not focus on their analytical abilities in English 5.

Teacher D presents the book by simply giving them the novel and therefore lets the students form their own opinion about it. She has the English 5 students read a novel and answer questions about it, similar to what Teacher C does. She does, however, allow the students to have group discussions about the novel, using the cooperative language method (Richards and Rodgers 192). The students are then supposed to hand in their answers and
Teacher D corrects them. She ends the whole process with the novel by having an exam where the students have to answer some more question about the novel so she can see that they have read it and understand it. In English 6 she tells the students that they are going to read a couple of novels and during the time they read they may make small summaries of each chapter in a small notebook that she provides them. They may then use their own summaries to answer the final questions about the book. This way of working is called “snowball summaries” (Collie and Slater 52). This method help the students with their comprehension but the risk is that the first chapters will have more extensive summaries than the ones in the middle and the end due to repetition. If a task is repeated too much the risk is that the students may lose interest in it (52). Focusing on the content of the text is the content-based approach (Richards and Rodgers 204). The students are allowed to discuss with each other and work together with the summaries, the cooperative language method, if they want to but the final exam is individual.

Teacher E, in English 6, starts off with introducing the author and the novel by talking about the themes of it in relation to themselves [the students]. This is a way of getting the students ready for the text (Collie and Slater 23) and a method called “using the theme” (23). When she uses Of Mice and Men she has the class listen to the novel and read along. She does this because of the amount of spoken language which may be difficult for some students to comprehend. Listening and reading the novel at the same time gives the students an opportunity to pay attention to detail in another way than when they are reading the text; they can focus on the understanding part and not only on decoding (Collie and Slater 66). When she worked with The Fault in our Stars she introduced the author John Green by showing the class some YouTube clips of him because he talks in the same way as he writes. She then proceeds to talk about what the novel is about – in this case a young girl having cancer – and what it is like being young and having difficulties. By doing this she opens up for the students
to have a better understanding for the main theme of the novel and the students might connect more easily with the main character by understanding his/her situation. Then they start reading. They have specific sections to complete for each week and they get some time during class to read as well. She gives them questions to discuss in groups and once a week they are supposed to write a summary of what has happened so far just to check that they are all reading. She combines the content-based approach with the cooperative language method which is ideal for the students to get as much as possible out of the novel through interaction with each other. She also includes the whole language method as she has the students read and write during class and therefore focuses on their basic skills (Richards and Rodgers 108). The examination is a written report about the book and they may choose between an easier task and a more difficult one where they analyse the novel. They also have small group discussions with her about the book, groups of about 4-5 students where they discuss the book with her. It is a discussion based on a questionnaire. Having a questionnaire as a support helps the students with the discussion (Collie and Slater 71).

Teacher F focuses on the students’ creativity, their production of English, and analysis. When introducing a novel she does it in different ways. One way is that the students read the first few paragraphs and then they create a chapter of what happened before, “writing chapter 0” (Collie and Slater 34). This allow the students to creatively think about a possible situation that occurred before the first passage without having read the novel. They may also work in groups with this and work with it for a couple of days and write an essay that they hand in to her and other students. Both she and the students comment and hand the essays back. This is a method called community language learning (Richards and Rodgers 90) and with this method the students advice and support each other with their work instead of just relying on the teacher’s feedback. The second way she introduces the novel is that she handed the novel in the dark with only candles lit and they start reading it. She
never tells them what the novel is about since she wants them to form their own opinion of it. By not telling the students anything about the novel she does not inflict her values of it onto the students and therefore the students are free to form their own opinion about the novel based on their own experiences, and existing cultural capital. The students also make bookmarks that connect with the novel’s theme or a certain phrase that is important in the novel. When discussing the novel she does not allow the students to ask what, why or where to the text, only how. Questioning the text helps the students with getting into the novel and its meaning deeper (Lundahl 209). When the students discuss the novel they do it in class where Teacher F has the students run the discussion themselves, she is only there to keep the discussion going. This method is called the silent way (Richards and Rodgers 81). This method focuses on having the students create language and really using each other in order to understand the novel. She also brings up grammar and vocabulary when it is needed. The discussion also includes the cooperative language approach. Her overall method is the content-based one since she is focusing mainly on the content. She exams the novel through three written assignments – one very analytical, one process writing and one hand written – as well as one speech and one presentation. Since the main focus of her methods are reading and writing she also uses the whole language method.

There are many similarities between the teachers because all of them have the same focus – that the students read and understand a novel. The methods that all teachers have in common are the cooperative and content-based ones. Considering what Collie and Slater states about gaining intercultural understanding through understanding someone else’s it seems logical that the most appropriate method should include content-based discussions. One might argue that including creative tasks like Teacher F does, deepens the students’ understanding since they have to understand the novel on a deeper level in order to create something cohesive. None of the teachers are aware of which didactic theories they are using
more than that they use a mixture of many including behaviourism when it comes to exercises and social amplification through feedback. They also follow both Krashen’s and Bernhardt’s models concerning the reader and appropriate input. All teachers but Teacher C consider the students’ presupposition and what amount of input might be appropriate for the students they are having in order for them to attain new knowledge.

3.3 Reasons for Variation in Methods

Why the teachers’ methods vary depend on the teachers and how they prefer working with a novel. It also depends on the students they are having. Every student has different values, social conditions, attitudes, and feelings towards reading and that influences their reading ability and how well they might comprehend a text. How early they are introduced to reading and how frequent they are exposed to it helps them later on in school (Lundahl 182). That is why it may be difficult for some teachers to find a novel that suits everybody, they have to choose a novel that suits the majority of the class and deal with difficulties that might arise in a way that develops that certain, or those certain, student/-s. Teacher C, for example, who focuses on his own interests may experience that some of the students lack the interest in getting into the novel while Teacher F might find it easier to maintain her students’ interest in the novel because she does a survey to find out what they like and chooses a novel accordingly. The main difference between these two teachers’ students are which program they attend. Since Teacher C has students from a not so study motivated programs it might seem logical to keep his methods simple. But, since one of the school’s assignments are to stimulate the students’ desire to learn and develop (Curriculum 5) it might be an idea to adjust the methods so that they do that. Teacher A and F has slightly more elaborate tasks than the others because they have students that are more study motivated and therefore they do not have to focus primarily on the students’ reading skill.
One thing that all of the teachers have in common is that they combine a cognitive and sociocultural perspective on their methods (Lundahl 183). That is, they focus both on the structure of the text concerning textual structure, vocabulary, and grammar as well as the deeper meaning of the text with questions about it and analyses. Teacher A, E and F go deeper with literary analysis than Teacher B, C and D do and again, that depends on how they view their students based on their own, the teachers’, experience and what they think that the students are capable of.

Because it is the teachers that decide what the students are supposed to do with the novel, they also decide what to focus on; the efferent stance or the aesthetic stance (Rosenblatt 292). With the efferent stance they gather information like the students do in order to answer the questions that are given to them (292). This is something that everyone but Teacher F does. Instead she has the students asking the text questions themselves. When they apply the aesthetic stance they focus more on the meaning the text (292). How the students interpret the text depend on the students’ previous experience and existing cultural experience. This is something that Teacher F, A and E do when handing the students an assignment including an analysis. Both of these stances are important since they are important steps in understanding a novel.

Something that is really important according to all the teachers is that the students understand what they are reading. The teachers test this with reproduction by re-telling the story or answering questions, as Teacher D, C, and B do, or by having the students produce something like Teacher A, E, and F do. According to Lundahl it is when a student can produce something new that learning happens and knowledge is gained (186) and by this the students gain some cultural capital as well. Gaining new knowledge through intercultural understanding by reading novels can be connected to the previous statement about the school being a Maxwell Demon (Bourdieu “Practical Reason” 20). In order to change social room
the students have to move fast like the molecules signifying that they evolve. When the students evolve it suggests that they acquired new cultural capital through reading and understanding a novel. If a student fails to understand a text it usually has to do with the student’s own ability to read. It may also depend on that the text is not suitable for that particular student. Another reason may be that the assignment may not suit the text. From a sociolinguistic perspective it may also has to do with the student’s social and cultural background (Lundahl 196). How reading has been viewed and handled in both the student’s family, as well as during previous school years, influences how well the student copes with texts in upper-secondary school. Since the school is the other sphere where cultural capital may be gained other than the home (Bourdieu “Practical Reason” 19) it is a social room where the students may gain social status within the cultural aspect regardless of the students’ current status.

When introducing a novel that is about a different culture it is important to establish what the students know about that culture in order for them to understand the text and its context. Even though the students may have different cultural backgrounds and experiences depending on where they come from, school is common ground for them to gain new knowledge from and through that cultural capital which changes their cultural status. Making sure that the students’ cultural knowledge matches the text increases the possibility that the students gain knowledge (Lundahl 197) and through that attain cultural capital through intercultural understanding. Knowing the purpose of reading that particular novel and what it will end in – an analysis, report, etc. – also determines how much knowledge the student will gain from the task (198). If the end task will be answering questions about the novel the students will most likely only attain the knowledge required to answer the questions. If the end task will be an analysis the students will most likely pay more attention to the content and
context as a whole instead of just bits and pieces. All teachers are clear about their purpose of reading a novel and what it will end in.

**Conclusion**

What influences the teachers in their choice of novel for their students? Something that all of the teachers but one were concerned about was what kind of students they had. They wanted the novel to fit the level of English the students where on, not only the course. They also thought about the difficulty level of the novel, which should not be too difficult but challenge the students. Teacher C is the only teacher that had his own personal reference as the major thing that determined his choice of novel and none of the teachers choose a novel just because it was popular. One matter that all of the teachers had in mind when choosing a novel was the program the students attended. They did this in different manners though. Teacher A, E and F included the theme of the program into their novels such as Teacher A choosing *Flowers for Algernon* for a Science class because of its science content. Teacher B, C and D had the difficulty of the program in mind when choosing a novel, thinking – and to some extent knowing due to experience – that students from certain programs are not as study motivated as the rest and because of that chose an easier novel for that class. Experience is also an important thing when it comes to teaching. Through the years a teacher learns what works and what does not work with certain students but every student and every class is different. Just as Teacher A said about *Ladies No. 1 Detective Agency* not working for a certain class does not mean that it does not suit students from a certain program. It is difficult to choose a novel that suits a class of students a teacher has never met but in order to find out what might suit them the teacher has to ask them, as Teacher F does with her survey. One might think that that is extra work that they do not have the time for since a majority of teachers have more than one subject to teach, and it is time consuming to be a teacher, but the end result is worth it. Instead
of guessing what might suit a class based on a couple of questions to the whole class, which program they are attending, and course of English they are taking, one can find out how much every student have read, what they know, and what they like and choose a better suiting novel.

The methods that the teachers use range from having the students do analytical work and discuss the novel in depth and the teacher works as a tutor that helps the students only when it is needed during the work with the novel, to the teacher controlling how much the students should read week to week, answering questions, and learning new words. Again, the methods depend on what kind of students the teacher has as is stated in the curriculum. The most popular methods among these teachers were the cooperative and content-based ones. When it comes to gaining cultural capital through novels in English it is important that the students share their already existing cultural knowledge with each other since understanding someone else’s culture is essential in order to gain new capital in form of intercultural understanding. This can be done through discussions, as these teachers used, or through reading and commenting on each other’s work, as Teacher F had the students do. The only teacher that might obstruct the students’ gaining of cultural capital was Teacher C since he did not have the students discuss with each other, he had the students do all of the work individually. They might gain some cultural capital through the questions he asks them to answer but that depends on how the questions are constructed. He did explain that he works with the novel this way because he has weak students, but as mentioned before, a more creative method might help spark the students’ interest and therefore they might acquire more intercultural knowledge, and through that cultural capital, than they do just answering questions about what happens in the novel.

Concerning the teachers’ teaching methods and how they differ, it depends on what kind of students they have and how the teachers like to work with a novel. All teachers but
Teacher F works with questions about the novel. The focus of the questions vary depending on how analytical the teachers want the students to be. Teacher A and E include analysis and content based questions whilst Teacher B, C and D focus on content based questions. Teacher A and F are the two teachers that does not use the novels purely to gain language proficiency since they do not have grammar and vocabulary as some of the main focuses, they focus on these two aspects if the situation calls for it. Since a novel can be used to teach not only intercultural differences but language as well one might argue that both should be included when choosing methods to work with a novel. Choosing a method that just includes having the students read the novel and checking if they have read it is not sufficient for an upper-secondary school student since, as Teacher D says, if a student cannot read a whole novel they will not pass the course. The teacher should therefore choose a method that challenges the students he/she has just enough so that they develop not only their reading skill but their language, understanding skill, and to some extent their analytical skill as well. English in upper-secondary school requires students to read a novel and can they not manage that, something has been overlooked in some of the previous grades.

When I first started this research I expected that there would be bigger differences between the teachers’ teaching methods. The fact that these six teachers teach similar surprises me to some extent because there are many ways to teach English novels. Of course, if I had included more teachers in the research it may had ended in different results. The similarities among these teachers’ methods might have to do with their education and the students they are teaching. Teacher A, C and F are the ones that did not study English in Växjö but Teacher A and F seem more interested in doing more analytical work with the novels than Teacher C. Yet again, it depends on what kind of students they have. All but teacher A and F has less study motivated students and are therefore limited in their choice of teaching method since it cannot be too advanced. However, as I mentioned before, some of
the more creative methods that Teacher F uses might help spark the less study motivated students’ interest and help them develop both their reading skill and their understanding of texts.

One thing that strikes me as really interesting is the fact that even though the teachers are supposed to disregard their presuppositions about students from a certain program they choose a novel from a level that usually suits the kind of students that attend said program, they choose a novel based on their experience. Does that mean that the teachers consciously disregard the fact that they are meant to meet every student on his/her level and not go purely on experience? To some extent; yes. Even though the teachers are aware that they should choose a novel depending on the students they have and not the program the students are attending, all of the teachers have experience concerning students that usually attend each program and therefore they know, from experience, which novel that usually fit these students. They consciously classify the students. However, some of the teachers are interested in trying new things, suggesting that they challenge not only the students they are having but also themselves and their experience which might be difficult to do. It is a dangerous thing, being set in ones way of thinking without having the insight to challenge ones prejudices.

School is the one common ground everyone have where one might acquire cultural capital and through that be able to transcend to a different social status in the future. Because the teachers represent the elite of the school they have the power over how well the students may acquire cultural capital. The teachers in this research seem aware of the power they possess and role they play in their students’ knowledge gaining and are keen to help and educate the students so that they [the students] may develop their intercultural understanding. The only teacher that seems to disregard what the students acquire when it comes to cultural capital is Teacher C, at least when it comes to gaining cultural capital through novels in
English. However, he might include intercultural learning in other aspects of his teaching which is not apparent in this research.

A second thing that really interests me is the teachers’ concern about the students’ reading ability. They all focus on their students’ reading ability to some extent instead of having them reading a certain novel because of what the students’ may learn from it. This suggests that the students’ ability to read are not fully developed when they attend upper-secondary school. This has to do with two things; how reading is viewed in the student’s home and how reading is viewed in the schools that the student attended previously. Because of how the teachers are focused on the students’ ability it signals that reading is not as important as other abilities in English which is very alarming. Are not students supposed to know how to read a whole novel when they attend upper-secondary school? What has happened with reading in school?

Further research that might be interesting is to compare the methods and novels in public upper-secondary schools with private upper-secondary schools and include all of the English teachers. Are there any differences and if there are, which and why does it differ? It would also be interesting to research the teaching methods of all of the English teachers in Sweden and find out the differences and what they might depend on beyond the students. Their interests? Level of education? Where they got their education? Another interesting research would be to find out the differences between teaching a novel in English and a Swedish novel. How does it differ? Concerning the time every teacher spend on preparations and correcting material it would be fascinating to find out exactly how much time a language teacher spends on preparations, correcting material and planning classes and how that might influence their work and choice of material and methods.
Works Cited


Teacher A. Personal interview. 9 Oct. 2013.

Teacher A. ”Additional Questions” Message to the teacher. 26 Nov. 2013. E-mail.

Teacher B. Personal interview. 18 Oct. 2013.
Teacher B. “Additional Questions” Message to the teacher. 26 Nov. 2013. E-mail.

Teacher C. Personal interview. 4 Nov. 2013.

Teacher C. “Additional Questions”. Message to the teacher. 19 Nov. 2013. E-mail.

Teacher D. Personal interview. 6 Nov. 2013.

Teacher D. “Additional Questions” Message to the teacher. 19 Nov. 2013 E-mail.

Teacher E. Personal interview. 7 Nov. 2013.

Teacher F. Personal interview. 18 Nov. 2013.

Teacher F. ”Additional Questions” Message to the teacher. 3 Dec. 2013. E-mail.

Appendix 1

Interview questions:

State which grade/course of English you teach. (Eng 5, 6, 7)

1. A little about yourself: where do you come from? How old are you? Where did you study to become a teacher? How long have you been teaching? Which school do you work at? How long have you been working at this school? Why did you choose this school?

2. Which book/books do you use in your teaching? Have you chosen it/them by yourself or does your school have a specific list to choose from?

3. Do you have any thoughts behind your choice when it comes to content? Or do you chose a book only as a resource for gaining language abilities such as grammar, vocabulary etc.? Why? Have you ever had any problems with it in your teaching (if you have used it before)? Do you choose books that suits the particular class you are teaching? Why/why not? Has your school or other teachers influenced you in your choice sometime?

4. How much are you influenced by the curriculum when it comes to the content of your teaching regarding what is said in the “central content”?

5. Describe how you work with the book/-s in terms of presentation for the students and if you read the whole thing or just a part of it. Do you collaborate with other English teachers when it comes to planning the work? Does anyone have to approve your plan?

6. Do you base your teaching on any didactic theories? Example what Bo Lundahl says in Engelsk Språkidaktik” about how you can work with books, your inspiration for how you work with the novel/-s: for language proficiency training, a creative activity, reader response, analysing the text, literary interpretation – where do you get that
from? Do you feel like the school provides opportunities for capacity building (kompetensutveckling) within teaching literature and language?
Appendix 2

Additional questions send by Email:

Do you have a teacher license? Does your school demand it?

From which programs are your students from? How does that influence your choice in literature? Do you get to know the class before you choose a novel or do you choose a novel depending on which program they attend?

How many English teachers are there in total at your school?

What do you do if a student falls behind or cannot handle the novel at all? And what do you do if a student is way more advanced than the rest of the class?
Appendix 3

Interviewer: Malin Larsson
Interviewee: Teacher A
Transcriber: Malin Larsson
Katedralskolan, October 9th

Malin Larsson: Alright! So . . . Well, let’s start. Please state which grade or course of English you teach.

Teacher A: Currently . . . is it going? [pointing at the recorder]

ML: Yeah! [laughs]

A: Currently, this year, I only have third year students. So right now I’m teaching English 7 where I have two groups, and I’m also teaching the IB program where I have the IB too then, the third year students. But generally I’ve taught all levels. But it depends on what year, this year I’m sort of on the more advanced levels.

ML: Alright.

A: Mhm!

ML: So a little about yourself, question one there. Where do you come from and all of that.

A: Where do you come from . . . [reading the question]. I come from Gothenburg.

ML: Yeah?

A: . . . originally . . . and that’s where I spent most of my life, right up until . . . I see your next question is “how old are you”, so I was born in 1973, which makes me 40 now . . . and I moved down here in 2008, at the very beginning of March 2008.

ML: Alright. And where did you study to become a teacher, was it Gothenburg?

A: Yeah! It’s . . . the thing here is that I’ve been hired here as a lector, on the base . . . the merits that was based on was my Ph.D. in English and English literature.
ML: Alright!

A: So, actually when I started working here in 2009 I did not yet had the formal teacher training.

ML: Alright.

A: So I’m doing that right now, gradually, as I’m working at the same time.

ML: At another university or…?

A: Here, at Linnaeus, so my education then was Gothenburg and where I did my Ph.D. in English and then I also took a course in pedagogy, aimed at higher education when I was still sort of within, more within the university system. So I had that when I came here but not the sort of “gymnasielärare”.

ML: Yeah. So which school do you work at, just state it.

A: Växjö Katedralskola.

ML: Great, thank you.

A: And I’ve been teaching here since August 2009 then.

ML: Alright. And why did you choose this school?

A: I did not so much choose it as it chose me! [laughs] So I moved down here in 2008 because the person that I was living with at that time got a full time permanent position here at the university so I tagged along and the idea was to see “okay, can we sort of base ourselves in Växjö and see if I could find a job as well and then sort of lo and behold this position was announced in 2009.

ML: Alright!

A: “Lektor” hasn’t been a very common position to be announced in the last decade so that was really sort of lucky and so and . . .

ML: Yeah!

A: . . . and then I got the position as well!
ML: Okay! So which books do you use in your teaching? I got a list here . . .

A: That’s a list for the whole school, yes.

ML: But you yourself . . . Which books do you prefer?

A: What I’ve used here, so far, is . . . with English 5 I’ve used [looking at the list] *The Curious incident of the dog*, also . . . *The no. 1 Ladies’ Detective Agency*, and then moving into English 6 I’ve had *Animal Farm*, what else have I had . . . Yes! *Flowers for Algernon*, Daniel Keyes. An old sort of sci-fi classic, and then I’ve . . . the main thing for me here has really been teaching English C, or now English 7, okay.

ML: Yep!

A: So! Those I think are the titles I can think of, I’m sure I’m missing something but, yeah!

ML: Those are what you remember?

A: Yeah!

ML: Alright! And how are you choosing them? By yourself or does the school have a list that you have to choose from? Why those books?

A: Why those books, that’s from my own head, but also, of course, based on what was available here. But no, I mean there’s no one that says you have to do this, you have to do that. And, of course, as a “lektor” I’m also head of English and I don’t decide for anyone else either, I mean we don’t sit down and decide. What’s sort of roughly decided is which books that we have are supposed to fit which step, or level, like this is more of an English 5 book, this is for English 6, and the ones that are English 7 books are more clearly sort of reserved for 7. But other than that it’s whatever you, whichever you would like to . . .

ML: So theoretically a teacher can choose any books he or she likes?

A: Well, yeah!

ML: As long as it fits the level?
A: Exactly! I mean, I suppose if a teacher picks . . . if a teacher . . . if colleagues heard that a teacher had picked, for instance, Charles Dickens *Great Expectations* for English 5, I mean I suppose the colleagues would like “what? What are you doing here? What are you thinking?” But other than that . . . and then there’s one thing also because in English 7 we offer a sort of Cambridge track, variant, so it’s always been a set novel for the Cambridge test. And the past few years that has been *Lord of the Flies*. So there I could say that *Lord of the Flies* has been picked for me, if I have Cambridge students we have to read *Lord of the Flies*. Which I don’t mind and they don’t seem to.

ML: Well, it’s a good book!

A: Yeah!

ML: So when you choose your books, do you have any thought behind it like “I wish to accomplish this and that with this book”? Is it strictly a language resource or is it something else?

A: No it’s not strictly a language resource but I would say that’s . . . I would say that that is priority one. Vocabulary, seeing how texts are constructed, sort of seeing that in action, reading comprehension, obviously all of that but then . . . I also move it into more sort of literary analysis and sort of questions of particular cultures and intercultural understanding and all of that, so I mean it’s very sort of holistic and organic. So I don’t think that there’s any teacher here who would have just one thing in mind when they bring in a novel. But you try to get as broad and sort of effect on learning outcome as possible by using just one novel and I mean . . . the novel becomes a kind of hinge or nexus for learning lots of different things so you talk about it, you can write about it, you can response, potentially respond to the novel with your own creative responds, anything! You can bring listening into it, on a few occasions if we have an audio book version. I’ll start the whole reading of the novel off by having them listen to the first few pages. So it’s like listen and read along and by that you get into the story
and you also . . . you get the sort of combined listening/reading thing which is of course . . .
one aspect of that would be pronunciation, as you read – you hear.

ML: Okay. Have you ever had any problems with a novel in your teaching?

A: Okay so that question can be interpreted in many different ways, you mean like if students
hated it or….?

ML: Yeah and any kind of problem you can think of! It can be that the students hated it, it
can be that they didn’t understand it at all . . .

A: Yeah so that it would be to the extent that you think “okay, we are not doing that one
again” . . .

ML: Yeah!

A: Not really . . . I would say that when I used No 1 Lady’s Detective Agency in English A, or
5, it didn’t seem to go down so well. I think that . . . My analysis was that this was probably a
bit too complex for English 5 so what I took away from that was that this is more of an
English 6 book, maybe then they are a bit more mature because it is . . . I don’t know if you
have read it?

ML: No . . .

A: No, it is actually fairly complex when it comes to narrative technique and structure there
so like where are we in time now, it sort of going back and forth so . . . and that of course . . . I
think for English 5, you should reserve English 5 I think, judging from my experience, for
more sort of linear stories. If it starts getting a bit sort of . . .

ML: Back and forth?

A: Yeah, then you can lose them already there but English 6, I don’t know what happens
during the summer between first and second grade but then they are usually a bit more ready
for something that is a bit tricky, sort of. That I would possibly call a problem and of course
problems are interesting because, at least . . . problems are potentially helpful there then if you
try to analyse them and try to realise “what was the problem with this?” And it does not necessarily mean that this book is hopeless, it could be that you made the wrong choice in terms of target group with it. But other than that I haven’t really . . . I haven’t had really students complaining, they rather been fairly patient and taken what you given them [laughs].

ML: Alright! [Laughs] Well, that’s good! Do you ever choose books that suits the particular class that you are teaching? Not just because this is a level 5 book but I think it’s a level 6 class? Have you chosen books just because of the class?

A: Yeah! To some extent it’s like let’s say you’ve had the group for one term and you read your first novel, and now . . . then you have the opportunity to sort of gage the level, maybe then for the next novel you . . . either you lower the level or you sort of [makes a hand gesture suggesting a rising object]. Bur mainly I think what has made me sort of tailor the novel to the group has been more what program they are enrolled in.

ML: Alright!

A: So it’s like . . . because you want to think also of the . . . and even more so now with the new gymnasiet [upper-secondary school] where it is even more sort of more focused on the program goals so for instance I did Flowers for Algernon with a science class because it’s about scientific experiments, treating a human being as a kind of lab rat, all sorts of questions about the ethics of the scientific experimenting, and all of that. So . . . and same thing with using Animal Farm with a social science program class that’s more about sort of group dynamics and politics and things like that. So I try to think about that when I have a class from particular program it’s like “okay, how do we sort of colour it?”. Then of course when you get to English 7 you have combined groups and then becomes much more difficult to think in terms of what program . . .
ML: So you experience difference in level between the different programs when it comes to the understanding of the book or ability to read or anything? Like particular differences between the different programs?

A: Not necessarily . . . maybe but . . . What happens and which is kind of a received truth is that science classes are generally quite good at everything [laughs]. Generally speaking. So with a science class you can often . . . and even if they have some problems with comprehension they work very patiently and they want to do what I want them to . . .

ML: They have the motivation?

A: They have the motivation, but . . . and they can often be quite sharp. I mean it’s one thing they are doing sort of maths and biology and physics but they can be quite sharp when it comes to literary analysis and things like that. So often there you find sort of broad talent . . . but even still I can’t really say . . . and then other programs are at a lower level or . . . each class, each group, is unique really which is kind of fascinating. So you never quite know what’s going on here, where are they, where are they at and I’ve . . . I also in particular had estetisk classes that have been really good when it comes to really getting into analysing and discussing a text and who could also handle fairly complex texts so yeah . . . I think that’s my answer right now [laughs].

ML: Alright! Good!

A: And then there are exceptions of course!

ML: Has your school or other teachers influenced you in your choice sometime?

A: Of the top of my head I don’t know . . . I mean you do discuss these things. We have a fairly good sort of environment here when it comes to sharing and helping each other so you talk about “okay, do you have a novel . . . which novel would you pick for a class that bla bla bla, well what about this one”, we have an exchange like that. And I can’t say that of the top of my head but . . . it’s very probable that someone has influenced my choice at some point but
in a good way . . . once again it’s never about sort of “you should do this, you should do that” so besides the thing about *The Lord of the Flies* being a set book for the CIE it’s nothing “you have to do this”.

**ML:** Alright. Great! So on to the curriculum, how much are you influenced by the curriculum when it comes to the content of your teaching or the book?

**A:** As much as possible . . .

**ML:** Do you follow it point to point or do you pick stuff or do you choose what suits the particular book?

**A:** Yeah, I mean it’s . . . [sighs] Often, I mean often it’s quite . . . It’s quite easy to find in any given book aspects that connects to pretty much everything in the sort of central content but of course any given book will have clearer or stronger connections to certain things. But I mean I do keep in the back of my mind what it says about sort of the content of communication bla bla bla . . . [referring to the central content in the curriculum] what is it we should be talking about when we are talking about things. And so, okay . . . And I mean things like, for instance, ethical questions, and things like that, social relationships is very obvious how that fits with pretty much any work of literature. And then, of course, once again, given then exactly what a novel is about it will fit with A, B, D or all of them [referring to the grades] but yes, I do think about it . . . I think it’s very important that you don’t lose track of the guidelines that we are following and just sort of get swallowed up “oh now we are doing this novel! “ and then you drift off and forget about what is it we are supposed to do? But I mean I think in that sense Sweden is fairly good compared to, for instance, Germany where you have very clear guidelines about which works should be used, what should be covered, here it’s more general, right? Like “well, you should talk about ethical questions”, it’s a bit more loose and it gives you freedom and it also makes it fairly easy to follow the guidelines without feeling like you’re a slave or something [laughs].
ML: Alright! So if you pick a book that you are working with, or have worked with recently, how do you work with it in terms of presentation for the students, do you read the whole thing or just a part of it, and do you collaborate with other English teachers when it comes to the planning of it?

A: Usually the planning is more of a solitary thing. But also once again we do ask each other for advice and we also have an exchange of sort of materials that we use with a novel, I mean so that everyone does not reinvent the wheel so . . . “I’ve worked with this novel, I’ve compiled a word list, I’ve compiled some study questions, I’ve compiled some background info”, well then we try to make it so that becomes sort of a growing data bank that everyone can use. In that sense but other than that, of course you plan “okay, how am I going to work with this novel?” and . . . One thing I like to do is to have a sort of pre-reading activity and then reading and then you have a sort of post-reading which is like . . . I mean post-reading is usually a discussion based on questions they’ve had whilst reading the novel and that can be either a joint sort of class discussion or small groups depending on what it is you want to accomplish. And they can also get a writing assignment after having read the novel . . . I usually . . . In English 7 I just give them a novel and study questions and I ask them to read the novel and then this week we are going to have sort of an examination of it. Whereas with English 5 it’s usually good to do it more piecemeal, “for next week, please read the first three chapters” and we talk about it like that. And then I think once . . . even when you get to English 6 you can use the model I had for English 7 that “okay, just read the whole thing!” and then we’ll talk about it, more like what you do at the university. Pre-reading activities can be . . . of course, to talk . . . just writing down the name of the writer and the novel and “has anyone heard of this before?” I mean you evince it and next thing then “okay, without now having read anything of the novel, look at the title. What is your response? What associations do you have?” etc. “Lord of the Flies, what the heck is that about?” I mean that’s one thing
and to also bring their attention to the importance of a title which we often forget, about the title. We often just read the work and be like “why does it have this title?”. And one pre-reading activity that I really like, that I’ve done a few times is I take a number of words or phrases from the first page of the novel and then I cut those up and I give them to them so they get little sort of cards or slips of paper and I ask them to “okay, in what order would you place these to form a coherent little narrative? How do you think . . . In what order do you think these should be?” and you give them like five minutes to do that and then you ask them “okay, so what is your order and what kind of story does that give?” and each group says “okay, so this I think this is about Mr Stevens who has fallen into a whole with his dog who is named Christopher . . . “ and “okay, yes, that works but is so completely not what is going on here” and then of course you let them read the first page “okay, so this was it!” which I think is a very good thing because there you get . . . you get, well obviously first if they understand the words and phrases there but then also their sense of structure. Which is about both being able to decode and comprehend a text, your expectations about structure, but also their own writing abilities. How do you structure things into a coherent text?

ML: That’s pretty smart!

A: Yeah . . . well, thank you! [laughs] That also . . . I mean . . . The very first thing that that happens is that they get to be creative and then they . . . okay, and then they have to read what someone else did when they were creative. It also shows them that just from a few little building blocks you can create many different stories, I mean . . . And usually none of them get it right. “Okay, look here, this is actually what’s going on”.

ML: And then you get a bunch of different stories as well.

A: You do! So . . . yeah!

ML: Alright, so do you base your teaching on any didactic theories, I don’t know if you have read Bo Lundahl . . .?
A: I have, the new sort of bible of English teaching in Sweden [laughs]. Yes, I mean I have been reading, I haven’t read it from cover to cover yet but read quite a lot of it and also sort of dipping in and yes! I mean, that has influenced some things I’ve done, I can’t really say right now which but I know I’ve looked at things and gone “yeah, I could do this!”.

ML: But Bo Lundahl aside, which didactic theories do you base your work on?

A: Sorry?

ML: Which didactic theories do you base your work on? Or do you have? Theories behind your work?

A: Yeah absolutely but I can’t, sort of, verbalise . . .

ML: Or name the theories?

A: No . . . it’s something you . . . sort of eat it and digest it and it becomes a part of you and after a while you don’t remember where things come from. So, I mean it’s . . . one thing is Bo Lundahl and there are other things . . . there’s also a book by Ulf Levin and David Norman, it’s called *Variation i Språkundervisning* [Variations in Language Education] which is a very good book with tons and tons of suggestions of, sort of, activities. Speaking, reading, listening, writing, whatever. And that also has a few things around literature. I’m actually . . . could be this thing about taking words and phrases from the first page and cutting up, could come from that one. But I don’t remember! It may be. So . . . that is not so much theory it’s more like a didactic cookbook that’s like “here are things you can do!” But . . . no, so I can’t really say . . . I can’t name, sort of, gurus and book and “this is where it all comes from”

ML: It’s like a potpourri from everyone?

A: Yeah, yeah . . . so . . . Yeah . . . You take things on board as they come along and then you also, of course, what you do then is . . . you . . . the first time you try something is when you test it in practice and then you either consider it a success or you reject it. But there also you have to . . . this thing about every class or group being kind of unique is like this is . . . “this
just fell flat here” or “I’m never doing this task or exercise again!”” but it may be the case that “well, with another group it would work excellently” so you shouldn’t give up either! So if you believe in a . . . In something you should try it at least twice.

ML: Alright! And the last one: do you feel like that the school provides opportunities for “kompetensutveckling” [capacity building] within teaching literature and language?

A: Yeah . . .

ML: Even for you with a Ph.D. in literature in English?

A: Yeah, I mean, absolutely because . . . and here we have the whole thing about, sort of, the more didactic/pedagogical side of things. It’s one thing that I have an advanced competence when it comes to literary analysis, literary history, etc. That doesn’t mean automatically that I know everything about how to teach and how to learn so absolutely, I’ve learnt so much since, sort of, leaving the university and entering the upper-secondary or “gymnasiet” world. One thing being, of course, at a university you’re more, sort of, up there in the air with more, sort of, fancy things and literary theory which borders on, sort of, philosophy, and . . . but then you get down here and it’s . . . I mean we have many really intelligent, brilliant students here but particularly then coming from the university and my very first year here I had to start by doing English A which is now English 5, it’s like “okay, what’s the right level? Where do I . . . Okay, we’re not here to talk about like, Jacques Derrida and Homi Bhabha and lots of fancy names like . . . it’s about actually “can you read three pages and understand what you read?” more like that. So . . .

ML: So they do offer . . .

A: They do, we do get those opportunities and particularly here we have an unusually active local section of LMS, or “Lärare I Moderna Språk”[Teacher in Modern Language], which has now changed its name to “Språklärrarnas Riksförening” [Language Teachers National Society]
and each year for the past few years we arrange a, sort of, language day, which was actually last Friday. So then the students get a day off and all the language teachers . . .

ML: From all languages?
A: All the language teachers get to listen to lectures and workshops and things like that.
ML: And they occur often or….?
A: Once a year. Once a year we have done this at least since I got here. So we bring in lecturers and teachers from outside and not just from Linnaeus University but . . .
ML: From all over the place?
A: Yeah, even from abroad, if we can afford it, so yes, but I think that so far it has been very much a focus on, more sort of the language side of things, not so much, at least when it comes to English, not so much about, sort of, methods and tools for doing literature. More, sort of, grammar and . . . but we’ve had a bit of it, with literature. And this time we had a focus on interculture and how to discuss culture and intercultural communication with students but I think we should try to get a bit more about literature. Because it can end up being left to the side a bit and teachers are very focused on “how do we get our students talking? What are some good speaking exercises or tasks?” but, of course, we should not forget about literature and what you can do with that and one thing does not exclude the other because here you have a question about which abilities you focus on, communication, reception, interaction, well of course it all, everything. That’s why using literary works is so effective because you can do all these different things around them.
ML: Yeah, in theory you can use a book and do a whole term just about the book. And get everything from the curriculum as well.
A: Absolutely, and one thing to note here also is, of course well does it necessarily have to be whole novels? What about short stories? What about poetry? What about plays which is also then in the new curriculum, it is more clearly written that it shouldn’t just be novels it also
says, sort of, I think at least for English 6 that it says, sort of, poems, plays so . . . there, oh now I’m leaning back [referring to the recording device and leans forward]

**ML:** Oh, it’s okay!

**A:** I think also when we talk about capacity building I think things need to be done because I think that language teachers, English teachers in Sweden have been fairly used to “well it’s about prose fiction and it’s about reading novels” and not so much poetry and plays, I don’t know at all so there it would also be good to do a few things, both locally and sort of nationally, “yeah but exactly how do you or can you or may you use poetry with students that are 16, 17 and 18 years old? What poetry is there?”.

**ML:** Alright! Have you ever thought about doing something with just English teachers like a capacity building of your own with just the focus on English?

**A:** You’re thinking of me as a . . . ?

**ML:** Yeah, the teachers here like if you talked about “oh we should go there and listen to that guy about this or that”?

**A:** We haven’t done so much of that. What I’ve done . . . I mean, one thing about being hired as a “lector” with a Ph. D is that “well, okay, you should be able to share your competent” so I have done a few things like that where I presented things to the colleagues. And what we’re doing now is that in a few weeks’ time we are going to Edinburgh, all the English teachers on one of those, sort of, study trips. Well I mean there will be a bit of literature in there, there is something that is called the Scottish Central Storytelling or something like that that we are going to visit. But mainly that’s about, sort of, seeing Scotland, more of the culture broadly. But I mean we are lucky being right next to a university we don’t necessarily have to say “okay, let’s go listen to that guy” it’s more a few times we’ve invited people here “so let’s invite Maria Estling Vanneståhl and she’ll come here and talk to us about ICT in the classroom with English, let’s invite Emil Tyberg because he was involved in drawing up the
new curriculum for English, let’s get him here and talk about what he was thinking!” so we’ve
done a few of those . . .

ML: Alright, great! I can’t think about anything else that I want to ask right now . . .

A: Yeah and that’s almost 40 minutes now which is going to be lovely for you to listen back
to like “what was said . . . ?” [laughs]

ML: [Laughs] I think it will be alright! Thank you so much!

A: Thank you!
Malin Larsson: I’ll be transcribing this afterwards and I don’t want to translate it as well . . .

Teacher B: Okay!

ML: So please begin with stating which grade or course you’re teaching.

B: I teach both English 5 and English 6 and also this year I have the ninth graders who hasn’t passed and they are still here at our programs.

ML: Alright, great! Well then, question number one! Just a little about yourself, answer the questions as you go through . . .

B: I come from Åryd which is just outside of Växjö and I’m 34 years old and I studied in Växjö at the university to become a teacher as well and I have been teaching for [laughs] well! Since 2006, I always think that I’m a new teacher but I’m not anymore! What is it, seven years?

ML: Yeah!

B: Oh my God, yes, seven years! Apparently so! And I work here at Kungsmadskolan, and I have been working here . . . this is my fifth year . . .

ML: Here at this school?

B: Yes, because I was at home when I had a baby, I was for a year and a half. Is it my fifth year . . .? Sixth . . . yeah, my fifth year. And . . . why did I choose this school [reading the question] . . . I . . . when I started to work I started at Teknikum and I also got a class here and this is my old school, I went here myself.
ML: Oh really?

B: Yes and I never thought I would end up here, but I did! And I think it started with me just getting a couple of extra hours while I was studying. And then it became more and more. And at one point I . . . there wasn’t any more so I worked one year in Sävsjö with the seven to ninth graders and then I came back here. So it’s really a coincidence that I happen to come here.

ML: Alright, great! And question number two, the books that you use in your teaching.

B: Books, now you mean novels?

ML: Yes, novels!

B: It depends on the class I have a bit and it depends on I guess my own interest of the time, if I want to start something new, if I want to try something new or if I want to rely on something I’ve done before and do that again so it depends, but . . .

ML: Do you have a certain list of books that you have here at the school with class settings and . . .?

B: Yes, we do, and of course that limits what we can do also . . . Do you want names of the book?

ML: Yeah! Some of the most popular that you use.

B: I’ve used a book a couple of times called *iBoy* by Kevin Brooks and it’s for English 5 since it’s kind of thick, I think kind of 250 pages but it’s kind of an easy language and the students usually think it’s exciting because it is exciting, it keeps happening things . . .

ML: All the time . . .

B: Yes, in every chapter so when you finished one you just want to know what is going to happen. And Kevin Brooks is a known author for writing for youth so . . .

ML: Yeah . . .
B: We use that and... *Stone cold* is one of the other books that I’ve used for English 5 even though it’s kind of thin, compared to the other ones, it still has a complicated content. I don’t know if you know anything about it?

ML: No, sorry!

B: No? Well... there are two people who are telling the story, there are two narrators, and one is a boy who ends up homeless after his stepdad kicks him out of his house so he ends up in London on his own and the other narrator is a serial killer who, which you don’t understand at the beginning, doesn’t like homeless persons. So! And they kind of end up together later on. So it’s kind of confusing sometimes, I’ve been using it a couple of times. Sometimes they get it like that [snaps her fingers] and sometimes it’s more difficult to...

ML: Understand...?

B: Yes but I usually try to explain it in the beginning that this is how this book is built up and this is how it works so, you know, so I try to tell them when the person is speaking. That’s one that I’ve used as well.

ML: Which is the most popular book that you use? Or have used most times?

B: I don’t know because I use a book maybe two or three times and then I always feel like “I should get something new!” And I don’t know if it’s me or if it’s something that the students had said or something but sometimes you just... I don’t know... Because even if I think that the students would like the book, and sometimes they do and sometimes maybe they don’t, even though I try to choose them from their perspective, sometimes it still doesn’t work, sometimes you just get the feeling that “okay, let’s do something new”. For English 6 I used *Of Mice and Men* a lot. And I just did, actually, again and I think that is a good book because there’s so much to talk about in that book. We just got a couple of new books here, I haven’t read any of them. One is called *Holes*, I don’t know if you know anything about that? And the other one is *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*, I haven’t read that one myself yet.
ML: Me neither, I know that’s a movie.

B: Yes, it’s based on a book and I haven’t seen the movie either so I will but I haven’t yet.

That’s always the thing that even though you want to read . . .

ML: You got to have the time.

B: You got to have the time, exactly, and you just got to, kind of . . .

ML: Do you have a like a list of books that you have here at your school that you maybe can email me later?

B: I don’t know if we have a list because we kind of moved all books down to the library, before we had our own room at the English department but we don’t have so many books for everyone in the classes. We just have a couple of books and then we have a lot of just a couple, maybe ten from one and things like that. So that we can . . . because it’s not like we always have the people in the class read the same book.

ML: Okay, so you work with different books at the same time?

B: Yeah! In one of my classes right now, English 5, we have two books. They got to choose from *iBoy* and another book called *The Statistic of Probability of Falling in Love at the First Sight*. So I have two. And sometimes that makes it more complicated for me but sometimes I’d like for them to choose also.

ML: Yeah, alright! Yeah, have you chosen the books for yourself or do you have a specific list of books to choose from?

B: I mean we choose from the books that we have, of course, but we can also . . . if like the two books we just ordered now one said “oh, we should get these ones!” and . . .

ML: And that was just a regular person? Not the head of the school or something like that?

B: No, like another teacher like “I heard of this one or that one”. We try to keep track of new books all the time. I went to the book fair in Gothenburg a couple of weeks ago and tried to, you know, “what are the new books?” and things like that. So we try to. But then it’s also . . .
someone has to read them first and we would like to try them on maybe a couple of persons first before we buy 35 of them. So it’s kind of a long process and a lot of time before anything happens, unfortunately.

ML: That’s how it is . . . Alright. Yeah, and your choices; do you have any thoughts behind it? Like when it comes to content or is it just your heart’s desire at the moment?

B: I try . . . of course it’s the content because our students . . . a lot of them don’t like to read books and a lot of them don’t have . . . they haven’t read a lot of books before either so whenever they are going to read a book they get scared and they just, kind of, don’t do it. So the content I think is very important because it has to be something that they think is interesting because if they don’t we’ve lost them from the beginning. So I think the content is very important but also, I’m not just going to pick any book because of its content of course, it has to be something that I think that they can manage and something, kind of, on the level where we’re at. But sometimes I pick a book from . . . If I have the boys working on vehicles here at this school and I don’t think that I’m going to give them the same book as I do on, maybe another program where they study and they all are going to have English 6, I mean it’s a big difference sometimes. Then I, kind of, have to . . . you have to think things through.

ML: Alright. Yeah. Have you had any problems with your . . . with any book during your teaching? Like you started with a book and you realised half way through that this is not going to work?

B: Yes, I’ve realised it but it’s not that it hasn’t been able to work, it’s more like they are not reading the book. You know, they can’t . . . you feel like “this is not going to work because they are not doing what they are going to do”. That’s the feeling. And sometime, of course, you can get the feeling that whenever they don’t like the book and they start complaining you can feel sometimes a bit [deep sigh] because I mean . . . I don’t . . . I can tell that they don’t like the book when they are finished. I hate it when they read like ten or fifteen pages and
they don’t like the book or, you know, stuff like that, so sometimes you can feel that it doesn’t go the way you want to because the way I want it to be is that they love the book and they want to read more but that’s not the reality, of course. So sometimes like that and sometimes...

ML: Do you feel like it’s because of the book or the students that you have . . .

B: I think it can be both. Or maybe them together. But that you never know before. You can never know that. You can only go with your gut feeling, kind of, and think about it, “what can I do here?” and then try it.

ML: And you usually choose a book that suits the class that you have?

B: That I think will suit the class because you never know and with English 5, those are classes that I haven’t had before. With my English 6 I had them last year so I kind of know them, what I think what they can manage and what I think they would like.

ML: Yeah, so you try and sometimes it’s good and sometimes it’s bad. Have you ever had the feeling that your school or other teachers has influenced you in your choosing a book sometime?

B: Not the school but, I mean, we teachers we talk to each other all the time. And we talk about different topics that we think would interest our students the most. “I’ve heard about this one” or “I’ve heard about that one” we start talking about it or . . .

ML: So you have a dialogue?

B: Exactly, all the time! Same thing with movies, you know, you start talking about things and, you know, “I think the students would like that” and it’s part of the job I think. How boring we are! [Laughs]

ML: Well that’s great! [Laughs] Alright, on to the curriculum, how much are you influenced by it when you do your teaching or plan your teaching when it comes to central content?

B: Maybe not so much, I mean, not influenced that much because . . . I don’t know . . .
ML: You don’t follow it from top to bottom? Or you pick some things?

B: Do you mean with all my teaching now?

ML: No, just the English with the books.

B: With the books, yes because you can kind of see when it comes to what fits here and I’ve done this and this and we can do it like that, we can get that, yes. We kind of match them together with what you are going to do.

ML: Because, theoretically, when you look at the central content you can use a novel throughout the whole central content.

B: Yeah, you can.

ML: Yeah, so I’m just wondering how much you do that?

B: But I wouldn’t do that. No, but I kind of, you know, try to get a few of the things in there that will make it work.

ML: That suits the topic you are on?

B: Yeah but I wouldn’t do that you said before because I’m thinking “what if they don’t like the book?”, it would be a horrible year! So . . . yeah, but you can find many of the things in there.

ML: Okay! Alright, number five; describe how you work with the book, and since you use two books at once I’m really interested in how you work with two books at once, in the same class.

B: They have been getting . . . first I present them to them, what they are going to choose, one or the other and then they have been reading in classes, every class about 15-20 minutes so they have been given plenty of time to read in class and with them I haven’t . . . I’m around and I’m answering questions and they can talk to each other how they sit because this time, and I’m trying this, that I have given them a date when they are supposed to have finished them and by then I’m going to give them a couple of questions to see, about the book, too see
how . . . if they have understood it and if they have read it and a couple of questions just about the book. So this time they are, kind of, doing it in their own, I’m testing that to see and we’ll see how that works, I don’t know . . . This is one of the classes that are going to have English 6 next year so they’re kind of motivated so we’ll see, I don’t know if that works. I know they do that in Swedish, they get a book and they read it and they finish it but I don’t know if that works in English. And I’ve been around and some people have already finished the book and they have grabbed another one to read in English, just like they do in Swedish so . . . I don’t know! I’m trying it! We’ll see!

ML: I would like to know how that goes!

B: Mm, interesting! [laughs] That’s the thing! Sometimes I feel like you have to try because sometimes I feel like I’m telling them the whole book . . . you know, you kind of . . . sometimes they don’t want to read, we’re having discussions and people haven’t read the book, I’m discussing with myself, I’m telling them what the book is about and I feel sometimes like “what’s the point in me doing this if I’m the only one speaking about this?” so I’m thinking I’m going to try if they can do it on their own. I wouldn’t do that in, like I said, my guys in . . . with the vehicles because there I feel like I have t, kind of, check up on them more but I’m trying with this one, we’ll see. [laughs]

ML: Interesting! Yeah, how much do you collaborate, you already told me that you discuss with other teachers, how much do you collaborate with other teachers when it comes to planning?

B: Not much. No, that’s always the problem because we always want to, we want to talk about what we do and we want to share what we do but we never have the time. We had . . . what is it, two meetings so far this year and it kind of just, you know? So we all kind of feel like we’d like to and every meeting we say that “we should do this and we should do that” but we don’t. Unfortunately. Because I think . . . and I think we could help each other a lot with
things like that, “I think this and this works!” “Great!” “I’ve tried this, it didn’t work” it’s
good to know sometimes, but we don’t. Unfortunately.

ML: Alright. Yeah, does anyone have to approve your plan, like some head of English or
something?

B: No. I’m head of English this year, as a substitute, but no. We try our own ways. But
usually the books that we buy, we have all kind of agreed on so . . . and of course . . . yeah.

ML: Alright. And the last one; do you base your teaching on any didactic theories like, I
don’t know if you have read Bo Lundahl?

B: I think we had that one when I . . .

ML: Yeah? Like, your inspiration for your work with texts and novels that you work with.
Like, where do you get your ideas for teaching?

B: I wrote my essay also for English C about literature in the classroom. Whenever . . . and I
had this brilliant ideas and then I came out to the classrooms, I was going to do it, and
sometimes I feel that the books differ from the reality and so you can get inspiration and ideas
“oh, I’m going to try this!” and “that’s a good idea!” and you can try that and take with you.
But sometimes you kind of still have to . . . it has to come from the novels, the class that you
have and . . . I don’t know . . . what you want them to know. But it’s good inspiration because
sometimes you kind of get stuck in your own thoughts. So it’s good to get ideas. And that’s
why I also miss speaking to my colleagues about things like this because, you know, you just
kind of . . . you need some inspiration. Because if you’re always on your own you just . . . you
get stuck in your own thinking. So . . . yeah.

ML: Yeah. And do you feel like your school provides opportunities for capacity building
within teaching literature and language?

B: Not so much maybe.

ML: Has there been any last semester or are you planning for anything this semester?
B: We went on “Språkdagen” [language day] at Katedral a couple of weeks ago, two weeks ago, LMS had prepared that for us. So we were there, all of the English department here and I haven’t been before and that was . . .

ML: Who organised that by the way?

B: LMS, Lärare I Moderna Språk [Teachers in Modern Languages].

ML: And those are, like, outside the schools, they are, like . . .

B: Like a membership, you’re in there and they organised it and yeah, that was nice because I feel like, at least the English teachers, don’t get to go on a lot of things like that. And I think we really need it just like everyone else, you need some input from other people and we need to discuss things with people that do what we do. I wish we had more.

ML: Yeah. Do you feel like you are treated differently from the other language teachers in Spanish and French . . .?

B: No I don’t think so, I just . . . my feeling is just that . . . I don’t know . . .

ML: It could be more?

B: It could be more. And I don’t know if anyone else has more but . . . and maybe we don’t have less than anyone else, that’s not what I mean but we don’t have enough.

ML: Okay. And if you would want to organise a day for, let’s say the English teachers, just here in Växjö, do you feel like you would have the support and time and, I don’t know, energy to do it?

B: No.

ML: No? Not at all?

B: No.

ML: Because you have enough here?

B: We have enough and I think that’s what everyone has, enough. [laughs] But it’s nice to be able to go on things like that if it’s not . . . the thing is if we have days like that, when the
students are not here and we have days were we get to work with things it’s usually something else. It’s usually not our subject that we are going to work with, it’s usually the programs. So we don’t have a lot of time for our subject. Unfortunately.

**ML:** Alright. And the LMS, is it the schools that organise it or is it LMS that organise it . . . ?

**B:** It is LMS who organise it and some of the leaders of LMS are teachers at Katedral so that’s why we were there this year. I don’t know so much about it actually.

**ML:** Alright! I think that’s about it!

**B:** Okay!

**ML:** I don’t have anything else I can think of. I just picked up on things when we went through . . .

**B:** Okay.

**ML:** Do you like to add anything?

**BB:** No, I don’t think so. Maybe it’s easier for you if you, whenever you start to write and things like that, if you feel like you want more!

**ML:** I can email?

**B:** Yeah! Sure! Because I’m thinking if you want me to mention more books or things like that, or if it was enough or . . . I don’t know.

**ML:** Yeah! Well, thank you!

**B:** Thank you!
Appendix 5

Interviewer: Malin Larsson
Interviewee: Teacher C
Transcriber: Malin Larsson
Teknikum, November 4th

Malin Larsson: Alright! I think [checking the recording device] yeah, it’s good. Just start from the top with stating which grade or course of English you teach.

Teacher C: Well at the moment I teach only at English 5 and [reading the question] my name is [blank] oh, it should be anonymous! I’m 53 years old, I’ve been teaching English for approximately 4-5 years but I’ve been a teacher for 25 years. So I have gradually become more and more an English teacher.

ML: Alright, why?

C: From just being a sports teacher. Well, because there’s not enough students that goes to this school and therefore I had to take more and more English. So hopefully I will go back to just being a teacher in sports. So I studied in, first of all, in Brighton, the University of Sussex and then I studied for another year at Växjö University that sooner or later became Linné.

ML: You mean for the English part?

C: For the English part, yes. And one year up in Örebro. That’s where I did my sports teacher training.

ML: Originally?

C: Yeah. “How long have you been working at this school?” [reading the question] I’ve been working here for 13 years now so I was former a teacher at what we call Vårdskolan [Nursing School] just south of Växjö and I did only a little bit of teaching there in English, mostly it was sports teaching. So I didn’t choose this school I was transported here when we were
communalised. We [Nursing school] was formally driven by Landstinget [County council] so now we’re a . . . another school in kommunen [County], I don’t know that word . . .

**ML:** Okay! And now number two; which book or books do you use in your teaching?

**C:** At the moment we have just an ordinary textbook called *Action and Progress*, or do you mean our novels?

**ML:** Yeah, the novels!

**C:** We have a list that we go from and they are ordered as to short books are on the list for English 5 so about 120, 150, 180 pages at the A-list or former A-list, now English 5 list. And there are also thicker books with more pages and American literature for English 6 so I don’t teach English 7 here yet and I choose the books from my own personal experience from them, I have read them all. So when I became a teacher here three years ago, four years ago, I read them all [Laughs] to be aware what they were all about.

**ML:** A lot of reading!

**C:** Yeah but it’s fun at the same time.

**ML:** Yeah, it’s always good to know your material.

**C:** Yes, really good.

**ML:** And the list, I’m I able to see it? Maybe you could email it to me?

**C:** The list?

**ML:** Yes, the list of books?

**C:** I don’t have it on my computer, it’s on the cupboards in the coffee room, our study.

**ML:** Alright! Do you know any titles of the top of your head?

**C:** Yes, for the moment I work with one book called *Stone cold* and one called *Hatchet*. And in English 6 I work with a novel called *Dances with Wolves* and then we have *Bend it Like Beckham* and we have, well, a lot of titles. I don’t remember them all.

**ML:** No, of course not! And this list, how was it made? By the school or by the teachers?
C: How the list was made?

ML: Yeah.

C: Well it was made when I came here and I understood that some books you could choose from if you taught at English 5 and some were more adequate for English 6 and that were the long books [laughs].

ML: Alright, but the books that were chosen were already here?

C: Oh yes. There isn’t much money to buy new books from.

ML: Alright, well, they cost a lot of money. Number three; do you have any thoughts behind your choice of book?

C: Yes.

ML: What kind of thoughts?

C: I wanted them not to be too difficult to read so I choose them from what we call the A-list or the English 5 list and from that list I choose those who inspires me so I think they should be according to my interest because it’s easier to talk about the books when you know them more or less by heart and you know them . . . when you have a feeling for them and . . . what do you say . . .

ML: It’s easier to teach something that you are really good at?

C: Yes, exactly! The same as I teach dance here. It’s my thing [laughs].

ML: Alright! For the resource of gaining language part, how much do you focus on the language abilities when it comes to vocabulary and grammar etc?

C: I focus mainly on vocabulary and reading ability. So after the book I have seminars where they talk about the books and I have a questionnaire where I’ve made sentences to put the words in and translate them and so on. And I have questions on the text for the understanding of the book but I have also made what we call “studiehandledning” [Study Guide], do you know the word for that?
ML: I don’t know, study guide?

C: Study manual? Yeah, maybe manual, where they when they’re reading they will find the answers as they go along and by reading the questions beforehand, like you let me do now, they will know what to look for when they are reading. They will remember “oh that was a question about this part” so they will actually have the plot with them all the time otherwise when you come to the end you forgot mostly but when they come to the seminar they can just look back on the questions so that’s why I do this manual.

ML: Have you experienced any problems with a book ever in your teaching?

C: Yes, in many, many cases this is the first time they actually read a book. Many students, pupils, haven’t read a book either in Swedish or in English so they are very, very poor readers.

ML: So the main problem is that they haven’t read enough?

C: Yes and they find it hard to remember what the first part of the sentence was when they come to the end. They experience difficulties and that’s why I find it difficult sometimes to talk about the book when I know that they haven’t really got the contents. That’s why I started this type of teaching now with the novels.

ML: Alright. Do you choose books depending on which class you have? Like if you have a class that you have had before and you know their ability?

C: Yes, I tend to pick the easiest book grammatically wise when I have, what do you say, weak classes, which are also sometimes considered to be weak. We have “omvårdnadsprogrammet” [Nursing Program] for example and they are often very, very weak in maths and English so I choose extraordinary easy books grammatically wise. And also sometimes a shorter book or even short stories instead of a novel.

ML: Alright. Has your school or other teachers influenced you in your choice anytime?

C: In choice of books?
ML: Yeah.
C: Yes.
ML: Like a teacher heard that you are having that class so they had a suggestion for which book to use.
C: No, I tend to go from the list of the easy books and the difficult ones so in that sense we are, what do you say, influenced. We have no more books than those in the cupboards so no, they don’t give suggestions.
ML: Okay. On to the curriculum. How much are you influenced by the curriculum when it comes to the content of your teaching regarding what is said in the central content?
C: I should be more concerned about it because the main bulk of the text should be the, what we call “omvårdnadskunskap” [Knowledge of Nursing] in that class and I have one class consisting of students becoming electricians and they should have other literature but since we have one textbook I tend to choose chapters from it. And I haven’t really thought about what texts I give them yet. That will be a later question.
ML: Yeah you did describe how you work with the books can you take me from the beginning when you start with a book, when you first present it and how you are going to work with it.
C: Yes, I choose the book for them and this is the first time I do this, otherwise I just present it, I read the first chapter to them and they follow in the text while I’m reading so they are both listening and reading at the same time. And then I can’t go on from there because they read in different speed so I can’t go on reading where I stopped because some are not there yet. But now I made this manual so there are these questions. I divide . . . I make the book in chapters p 1-20, p 20-40, p 40-60 and for each section of 20 pages there are questions and I have also looked up, let’s say 30-40 words so they don’t have to use a dictionary, they will read the words beforehand and then they will see “oh that was one of the words” and they will
find it both quicker and easier. So we have 20 pages per class [lesson] so tomorrow we will have the first 20 pages and those who have not read and are yet there they will have homework. Those who have studied the first 20 pages will have no homework. And then we will have the next 20 pages on Thursday.

ML: That’s a good motivation.

C: Yes and they work individually so they don’t have to feel forced to read, they can do the last pages at home and when they come to the end of the book I have a regular test on it where I ask about content and the plot and I ask about the characters, certain events and I have made 20 sentences where I picked the words from the ones I looked up on beforehand and there will be 20 words where I ask them to put in . . .

ML: Like a vocabulary test?

C: Yes in the same test.

ML: Alright. Have you done it any other way sometime?

C: Oh yes, I have just given out the book and they have read the book and I ask some questions now and then about the plot and so on and very few can answer them. That’s why I have changed my way of handling the books because they are supposed to be able to read longer texts now when they are at this level of schooling.

ML: So it’s more controlled now on your behalf?

C: When I work with a novel?

ML: Yeah.

C: Yes much more so. Because when they were to deliver a hand in a summary of the book that too many people had tried to borrow from each other or borrow from the internet and hand it in. And that’s why I get furious and I have sat there correcting a whole essay and then find out it’s a cheat.

ML: And realising it’s from the internet.
C: Yeah and I have no clue who I have graded. [Laughs] But I try to avoid that sort of testing.

ML: Alright, the final one; I don’t know if you have read Bo Lundahl Engelsk Språkidaktik [English Language Didactics].

C: No, I’m too old.

ML: Alright. But do you base your teaching on any didactic theories like he has a lot of examples on how to work with books, like your idea with the manual and the sections, where did you get that from, that idea from?

C: That’s my own idea now I haven’t based my teaching on didactic theories [emphasising the words] [laughs] it’s hard enough to get them to start reading and continue reading and actually finish reading so when you have guided them through a book they feel quite proud and you can’t go too deep into it, the plot or the grammar or words or so on but they feel proud and they feel a bit more secure to be able to handle long texts so I am satisfied when they feel satisfied with their efforts and so on.

ML: And you do what works for them?

C: Yeah.

ML: Alright. The last one; do feel like the school provide opportunities for capacity building within teaching English and literature?

C: Oh yes, we have quite a few courses we can go to. I went to one one-day course here in Växjö about alternative methods to make them speak for the first time, to present each other and describe things and so on. I actually bought the book, it was called Alternative Language Studying. It was a man in Örebro that written it. Alternativ Språkundervisning hette den [Alternative Language Teaching, it was called]. It was quite good and it works in all language teaching, not only in English but in Swedish and German as well. And there where methods for grammar, presentations, speaking, whatever you want.

ML: Alright. And is this a regular occurring event?
C: That was one of them. There are courses and we have certain days for kompetens utveckling [capacity building].

ML: Here at the school?

C: No sometimes they are at the other school, Katedral, so we go there. Some teachers choose to stay home and read their own novels to be better at understanding themselves [the novel] and so on. And we always have a lot of correction to do, or marking, grading and so on so we are allowed sometimes to stay home and do those gradings on bigger tests.

ML: To catch up on your regular work?

C: Yeah. And it’s quite a hard job so you don’t want to go to too many of these any way because if you get new impulses [input] and new ways of teaching you have to consume them and implement them and use them for yourself. And that’s not very easy when time is limited and your energy is limited and I have two subjects I have to be here as well.

[here the interview panned out into regular conversation about the work which is not relevant for this research]

ML: How often do you meet with the other English teachers here at the school?

C: Well we don’t interact very much, we sit in the same room so every day except Mondays when I’m teaching sports.

ML: Do you have like regular English teacher meeting where you interact with each other?

C: No. We interact in Swedish. We do lot of helping each other so my teachers, my fellow colleagues they borrow my material at the moment for course English 6, Dances with Wolves and I know they are interested in the other material as well.

ML: Okay, so you have like a . . .

C: I get tests from them so I don’t have to, what do you say, construe a test. We borrow from each other.

ML: You help each other out?
C: Oh yes. There’s a really good colleague working here.

ML: Alright. That’s actually it. I don’t have any more questions.

C: You don’t?

ML: No! Thank you!

C: Thank you!
Appendix 6

Interviewer: Malin Larsson

Interviewee: Teacher D

Transcriber: Malin Larsson

Teknikum November 6th

**Teacher D:** I live in Åseda for the moment and I am a genuine Smålander [laughs] and I am 63 years old on Friday and I studied in Växjö.

**Malin Larsson:** At the university?

**D:** Yes I did. And I started teaching in 1989 it was. And I’ve been working here all the time.

**ML:** And English is your main subject?

**D:** Well English and Swedish. But Swedish is my favourite [laughs]. Why did you choose this school [reading the question] well, somebody recommended me to ask for a job here and I had my practicing period for the teacher here who had applied for something at the university just when I was here so I was lucky to have my job here.

**ML:** So it was your first choice?

**D:** Yeah, it was so I was lucky finding a job immediately.

**ML:** Yeah!

**D:** So that’s number one [referring to the questions], anything else on number one?

**ML:** No.

**D:** Number two; which book or books do you use in your teaching? Have you chosen it or them by yourself or does your school have a specific list to choose from? [Reading the question] Actually the teachers . . . we have bought a lot of books and if some of the teachers has read a book that he or she recommends we have bought it, very often. And very often we buy at least ten or fifteen books or 30 for a whole class and we have some favourites.
ML: Such as?

D: I’ve just finished . . . well I’m now teaching English 5 it’s called and there’s a book called Hatchet that we very often use in English 5 . . . I’m thinking of the writer. We have it here [Gets up out of the chair and grabs the book from the cupboard behind me] that’s a bit worn out [Referring to the book] I’ve just used this in my class and they’ve read it and there’s always people who find it boring and nothing happens but a majority think that it’s a good book and some people even said that “this is the best book I’ve ever read!” they haven’t read so many books but since it’s about a young boy, he’s dropped . . . by accident is dropped down in a jungle, well not jungle but a Canadian forest. He has to survive there so it’s quite exiting you would say.

ML: What other books have you worked with?

D: One we use very often is, or I use, is The Outsiders. I never remember the writer . . . The Outsiders is about two gangs in a city and . . . well it’s about conflict between two gangs or youngsters in the city in the 50’s. It’s useful, it works. And Stone Cold is another one, do you know that one? We use that quite often to. And Big Mouth, Ugly Girl by Joyce Carol Oates. It’s about a school in the US and two individuals having . . . well it’s about young people, so to speak. I haven’t used it for a long time but I know that my colleagues do. And there’s another book that I’ve worked with a lot that is by Joyce Carol Oates, After the Wreck I Spread My Wings and Flew Away, it’s called. It’s about a young girl who is in a car accident with her mother and the mother dies and she has to move to her aunt’s family and there’s a conflict with the father and everything. And they have to . . . I’ve made a lot of things with that book, a working . . . a paper for the students with a lot of words and everything and it works really well, they find it’s a good book. But I’ve used that one in English 6. We have a number of books but, you know, you have your favourites that you use [laughs]. And . . . is there another one perhaps? Short stories by Roald Dahl is one that I’ve used quite a lot.
ML: Is it popular?

D: Yeah, and also . . . what’s the other one good short stories . . . Jeffrey Archer, he has written a number of short stories and there’s always a punch line in them, so to say, in the end of the stories. You have to be quite aware of getting them so yeah . . . They are more . . . a bit more advanced so I in English B, or 6 as it’s called now. Some examples. And yeah, that was number two. “Specific list” [reading from the question] we have agreed about some books that we should only use in the B or 6 course because they are a bit more advanced. That’s about it. So that you don’t . . . as a pupil you don’t get the book in the first course and then in the next one too for another teacher or something. That’s the only . . . but we choose quite freely so to say.

ML: Alright!

D: And number three; [reading the question] only that I want to find . . . since I very often have classes that are not book readers. Very often there is boys, you know, with the computer and all that. So I try to find something where they can relate to the main character and it shouldn’t be too difficult or too abstract or something. They like books where things happen and very [inaudible] ways so.

ML: Like a straight storyline?

D: Yeah, for example. So they don’t read for pleasure, not many of them, very few [laughs]. But something that can make them read and follow and go on in the story.

ML: Okay. Yeah, resource, for gaining language abilities [reading the question] which . . . ?

D: Just to consume a lot of English. I usually make a bookmark where I write “reading a lot of English is good for your language” or “reading a lot of books is good for your English” or something like that.

ML: So just for reading and getting to know the language a bit more?

D: Yeah.
ML: Do you include grammar and vocabulary as well?

D: I did in this Joyce Carol Oates book, can I show you?

ML: Yeah!

D: [Gets the book] the paper I made for this when I had the classes who are to become nurses, you know, this is very much about a girl at the hospital. Then I picked a number of words that relate to the hospital and the program, for example. So I try to . . .

ML: Include the program into . . . ?

D: Yeah, a little bit. Well, this is a good one. I’ve worked a lot, actually, with it [After the Wreck]. [Reading the next question] “Have you had any problems with it in your teaching, if you have used it before?” How do you mean . . . ?

ML: Like if you have taught . . . like if you have used this and this book, Hatchet and After the Wreck, a couple of times, have you ever noticed that . . . that the students have had any problems with it?

D: Well there are always a few students who don’t read, don’t like to read books, simply. Is still have in class, it’s simple enough for them, they just don’t start.

ML: Just the reading part?

D: Yes, they don’t have the habit of reading as I would like them to have. That’s the only problem, we have that in the Swedish course too, so. . . But, well . . . It works. That’s good enough? [Laughs].

ML: Yeah. And do you choose books that suits the particular class that you are having?

D: Yeah, I try to. They should try to be able to relate a bit personal to the book. There was one guy, he wrote “oh I love this book [referring to Hatchet] because now if I’m dropped in the wilderness I know how to survive!”, for example. He learned something. Not only English.

ML: How important is it for you that the pupils can relate to the book?
D: Well, it’s . . . it makes me glad, of course, if they can relate to it but the first goal is that they should just read it, to use the language, simply, and that’s good enough, I would say. You know, and nearly almost . . . well, a majority of my years, the last ten years, I had these classes with electricians and computer people and they are not very in for studying, so . . . That’s why I have developed an attitude that is on the basic “well you should read, just read”.

ML: Yeah, just read anything?

D: Yeah.

ML: Alright. Yeah, has the school or other teachers influenced you in your choice sometime? Like if you . . .

D: Well, as I said, sometimes the colleagues, we talk about our reading experiences and sometimes there are someone “well, this is a good one!” and we read it of course, a lot like that.

ML: Alright, like an open discussion?

D: Yes. But it’s always my own choice of title to work with.

ML: Alright. Number four then. About the curriculum. How much are you influenced by it when it comes to the content of your teaching?

D: Well I . . . I’m not thinking in those terms [laughs]. I’m not, no. Only that they should . . . well, it says in the curriculum that they should . . . well, I don’t know the exact words but we talk about literature and understand what they read, and so on. So we have . . . basically, well in the course 5, English 5, they should read two books [it is not stated in the curriculum how many novels they are supposed to read] that’s quite normal and then I choose the books for my pupils and sometimes they have chosen themselves from a number that I brought to the classroom for example.

ML: And how did that work?
D: Well, partly it worked well. Partly they picked books they knew there were a film made by it. It’s a . . . I have revealed some of them if you . . . you know if you have seen the film and read the book you can see the difference, it happens now and then, you see the difference.

ML: They always try.

D: Yeah, they make an easy way.

ML: And number five then.

D: Number five . . . [reading the question]

ML: Yeah, just describe how you work the book, like how you present it, how you work with it, how controlled the students are or if they should just read it and be finished by this date.

D: It’s different . . . this one, for example [Hatchet], with the paper with a lot of questions, when they have finished the paper and handed it in they have finished the book and everything with it. Then it’s up to me to correct and read it, of course, and then I make questions, for example, chapter 15 and 16 and a couple of questions so that I can see that they have read it and understood it and then they can just go on and . . . I like that way of working but that takes a lot of time to prepare for . . . to make a good paper in advance so . . . But this one, for example [After the Wreck] I just told them “in this course we are going to read a couple of books” and I brought them for everyone and you have a number of weeks to read it and they are given some of the lessons for reading, not everyone . . . and they also . . . the last times they just are given, I have given them a notebook and I said “make a small summary of every chapter and then when you have finished the book you can use your summaries to answer my questions of the contents”. And actually, a minority of my classes has used the notebook if they don’t like writing and some of them have a good memory but some haven’t so . . . they are sitting there like “what, this is too much, I don’t know what I’m talking about” because they haven’t read or they have dropped their notebook or something so it will be very different. Reading, making summaries, answering questions so that I can see that “okay, they
have read the book and they have understood the basic things and story”. And that’s about it.

Are we at number five?

ML: Yeah.

D: When I come with a book we always take the whole thing because in our English books sometimes, there are always parts of things and sometimes, of course, we read short stories as well. I have one way of using short stories I have used a number of times, not recently but . . . I call it Detective Reading. So I have two short stories, two different and half of the class are given one short story and the other half the other one and they sit down and read it and then they work in pairs with the two different stories and I have to ask you questions about your story, not the question ‘what was the story about?’ but you have to ask questions that can only be answered by yes and no. Then you try to find out the other one’s story.

ML: Okay! It’s like 20 questions but about a story?

D: Yeah, well, 20 or more but they are supposed to find out a little bit about the other one’s story and so in the end you are telling the other one’s story [laughs].

ML: Alright! So they are sitting in pairs and ask yeas and no questions to find out your story and then I have to tell your story in front of the rest of the class?

D: Yeah!

ML: Alright!

D: And those who haven’t . . . the half of the class who have interviewed the other one can also put together their answers so they can have a full story and a couple of them are re-telling the story, not everyone.

ML: Do they like that exercise?

D: Yeah, well, it works quite well because they can work and they can sit and talk and well . . .

ML: And use the language.
D: Yeah. I call it Detective Reading. You have to call it something.

ML: Exactly! Yeah, the second half, do you collaborate with other teachers when it comes to planning?

D: No, not really.

ML: Do you share your work?

D: Yeah, oh yes, we do here. We borrow each other’s things and if I have this paper, for example, I told the others “anyone can have it, it works well and it has been used. I know.” And I think somebody is using it right now so that’s nice.

ML: Yeah!

D: When you have spent a number of hours for something that works well it is welcome . . . anyone is welcome to use it.

ML: Yeah, the last part, does anyone have to approve your plan?

D: No, no. It’s my own business.

ML: Alright, the last one.

D: No, no theories. Well I . . .

ML: Where does your inspiration come from? Where do you get your ideas?

D: From experience, I think because . . . the best way of learning is trying to teach, I would say. So throughout the years I found out what is good and what is not good, what works well and what doesn’t so very often I use old things, classical things that always work and that is my inspiration [laughs] actually because I know and I know how long time it takes and things I can do and what I can’t and so on. And of course I try to pick up new things as well but literature is, well, it’s a bit classical. You can always use it every now and then I think.

ML: Yeah, there are books that never grow old.

D: Exactly.
ML: Alright, and the last part; do you feel like the school provides opportunities for capacity building within teaching English literature and language?

D: No. I don’t think so. There should be more, of course. I’ve been on some things but the last one was 1999, you see, so . . .

ML: That was a long time ago!

D: Yeah, it was really long but, as I said, I’ve worked for 24 years with this so I feel like I know what to do [laughs]. Yeah, that’s about it. “Capacity building”, I’m learning a new word here!

ML: Yeah, kompetensutveckling. I actually had to google it because I didn’t know . . . it’s actually something I cooked up for myself, I don’t know if it’s . . .

D: Capacity building, sound good. [laughs]

ML: [laughs] I don’t know, it works. People understands it.

D: There are so many words in English that I don’t know. I normally tell the pupils “remember, I am not a dictionary, I’m just the leader of your work!” [laughs]

ML: Alright! Well, that’s a good one actually! Well, that’s it! Is it okay of I email you if I got any more questions?

D: Of course!

ML: Alright! Thank you!

D: Thank you!
Malin Larsson: If you just start at the top and work your way through.

Teacher E: Okay. So I little about myself . . . I’m . . . I come from Växjö originally, just outside Växjö and I’m 43 years old now [laughs because she had to think] and I’ve studied in Växjö at Växjö Högskola [Växjö College] back then to be a teacher. I’ve been teaching for 14 years and I have been here at Kungsmad for a little more than five years now. Before then I worked at Komvux [adult education] in Nybro basically because that was the first job I got when I was done with my studies. I chose this school because there was a job here but I’m very happy to be working here at this school because we have a really good atmosphere here between colleagues and also very, very nice students so I’m very happy to work here.

ML: Alright!

E: Shall I move over to question number two?

ML: Yeah, question two; which books do you use?

E: I use some different books, I teach both English 5 and English 6 and of course you think about the level of language in the book when you choose it for the different classes. I teach at Samhälls Beteendevetenskapliga programmet [Social studies focused at behaviour science program] which means that the . . . often my students are pretty good at English, not everybody but on average they are pretty good. This year in English 5 we have read The Faults in our Stars partially because I thought it was really good and partially because we had it in . . . what do you call a whole klassuppsättning? [laughs].
ML: For the whole class?

E: Yeah, for the whole class, we have 32 copies. I normally have between 30 and 32 students in my classes. It was very well received by my students, they really liked it. They thought the language was difficult but they liked the content of it and they enjoyed reading it. This year I did it differently, normally they always read only at home and every week we discuss a section of it so they are supposed to be done by a certain page at a certain class [lesson] and this year I’ve done it differently. They have had the opportunity to read for 20 minutes at the beginning of each class because I found that that actually make them actually read the book instead of just going through summaries on the internet or just, you know . . .

ML: Finding the movie adaptation and stuff?

E: Yes. So I think they have appreciated it to and it has also created a very calm atmosphere in the classroom because when you sit there reading you can, you know, you get into a certain mood and the rest of the class is also more peaceful, I have found. Let’s see what other questions there where . . . Of course you use the book as a way of gaining language skills abilities but also to broaden their minds I think and I try to form the questions so they actually have to think. I do believe that only reading a book without discussing it, it doesn’t give you as much because through the discussion you . . . you find new ways of thinking through others and I find that very good because I think a part of our job is to make out students think. This is maybe the hardest part of our job.

ML: To be questioning?

E: Yes, to reflect and, you know, ask questions to themselves and to others. We didn’t, in this case, work so much with language. They didn’t get words as homework, we didn’t take up certain grammar things because it was more reading for reading because we find that they have troubles reading, they have troubles understanding what they read. Not so much with words but to . . . the whole . . . you know, to understand what does a sentence mean? Swedish
young people have trouble reading today, that’s very, very clear to us. Normally I also use a book called *Unarranged Marriage* in English 5 because I think it’s good and because the language, the level of language is good. English 6, I always use the book *Of Mice and Men* because I love the book. That gives . . . there is so much to discuss in it and I find my students enjoy reading it. Last year, and I’m going to do the same thing this year, they listen to it. So we listen to it in class and they follow in their books. Because it’s a little bit tricky because there is so much spoken language in the book so it’s tricky for them to read. But when they listen they . . .

**ML:** They comprehend it in another way.

**E:** Yes, so . . . In English, did I say for English 5 *The Faults in our Stars*? I meant English 6. I’ve done it with English 6. Okay, rewind! [Laughs]. So for English 6 this year I’m going to do . . . I’ve done *The Fault in our Stars* and we are going to do *Of Mice and Men*, so two books. In English 5 I will probably only do one bigger novel and then more short stories because it takes so much time to read a book. And they need more in the way of grammar practice and more word studies.

**ML:** So more abilities?

**E:** Yes. So *Unarranged Marriage* for English 5 and he others for English 6.

**ML:** Alright. I think that your colleague talked about a list that you have?

**E:** Yes we have certain books and they always read the books we have. We don’t ask them to go buy a book or to borrow a book somewhere so we have the books we have. We would like to have more and we are constantly upgrading and updating so yeah, we have a list of books.

**ML:** That is changing over time.

**E:** Yes, it is changing over time because some books you feel like “oh it’s outdated”, you can’t use that anymore and yeah . . .

**ML:** Alright. Is that list available for me to look at?
E: I don’t know if we have a written list of it but we could perhaps create one.

ML: That would be wonderful!

E: Yes and we can do that together [colleagues name] oh! The other teacher! [Laughs]

ML: I will not include that! [Laughs] That’s the best thing with transcribing, I can just “and . . . “.

E: Good! Alright, so the other teacher does not influence me in the choices I make apart from the fact that I choose from the list that we have.

ML: Alright! Yeah, I think that was three, right? Two and three?

E: Yeah, I think so . . .

ML: Great, number four, the curriculum.

E: Yes.

ML: How much are you . . . Do you follow it or are you influenced by it . . . ?

E: Sometimes, you know, it’s in the back of your mind so you know there has to be certain .. but it’s also, it’s also given, I think, that you talk about . . . you talk about culture, you talk about in connection when you discuss a novel, you use it in the way . . .

ML: It comes naturally?

E: It comes naturally, yes. Because the curriculum brings up things that you have to do, it’s natural. So you talk about it, you write about it and I always end my literature projects with a written assignment. So get both the talking, the writing, the reading and the culture because we always use English country literature. So it’s always about English culture somehow.

ML: Alright! So if you choose one book for number 5 [question 5] do describe your work, how you work with it, how you present it . . .

E: Yes. So I’ve just done The Fault in our Stars, maybe I can use that? So I started it by presenting the author and in this case I think that, because he has like a, what’s it called . . . where he just randomly talks on the YouTube, he makes movies, films, like a diary on
YouTube and it was very clear to me when I listened to him talking just [making a sound that indicates fast talking] it’s like the same way that he writes. So I wanted to introduce his way of writing by showing his way of talking. And he’s pretty advanced in his . . . he likes playing with words I think, this John Green, the author then. So we introduced it like this and we talked about, you know, because it’s about being sick of cancer and we talked about being young and having troubles and going through difficulties and then they basically started reading. I also have students in the class who, because you can find this book on CD as well, so they download it on their computers, the read version of it, so they could listen, those who have difficulties because you have to study English 6 on my program so it means I have students that have great difficulties with English and so they could listen to it. And then they basically started reading and each Monday I said “Okay, you have your classes to read and you can read at home and by Monday you should be done by page 50 to begin with”. And then I have made a set of questions and they discuss these questions in groups and they also, like once a week, write a little summary of what they have read so far because I wanted to be sure that they were reading actually and then now they have handed in a written report on the book that was like the final exam. They also have, they have a little group talk with me, students of maybe 4 or 5 where I have a set of questions and I ask them and they discuss the book with me so I hear that they are able to talk about it. And then they handed in a report and it was two, you could choose between two assignments; one easier where it was more of a summary response, you summed it up and you made your own comment on it or a more of an analysis where you choose, where you have to choose one specific topic in the book and discuss that.

**ML:** Alright. So the easier task, was it like up to a D? A C?

**E:** I said that the easier task, I said that for the actual task you can only get an E, because that’s more like, it’s basic. But for language, of course, you can get more. So if there was like
an E student who surprised me, it was possible to get a D maybe on language to bring that into the final grade. But as a task . . . the first one was an E task and the other one above that, C and up you could say. But of course, it is possible that the ones choosing the analysing assignment, they don’t succeed, they are not able to analyse so it becomes more like a summary and then it is possible to get an E on that one too, or F.

ML: So you conclude that book with a written . . . like a written report?
E: Yes.
ML: Okay.
E: And unfortunately we do not collaborate that much. We often say that we should. That we should create like a reserve or like a, what do you call it, like a, yeah, a place where you can go and find stuff to do so you don’t have to invent the wheel over and over again. Unfortunately we all sit there inventing the wheel over and over again so there are a number of us who are going to use The Fault in Our Stars but I have no clue of what my colleagues are doing with it. And this is, of course, not good and it’s something we always say “okay we have to work more on this” but when you have ämnesråd [subject council] like once every two months you have to discuss other things. Then you discuss books you bought, the tests you’re going to do together like now we have an upcoming midterm test that we all do and you discuss other things and there is never ever time for collaboration of that kind but then, of course, it’s up to us, we can sit down sometime else and we’re hoping that will happen one day [laughs] but we just have so much to do, it’s a priority thing of course.

ML: Alright! Yeah, the last one, does anyone have to approve your plan, like do you have a head of English that has to, I don’t know . . .
E: No and I am very self-going and free to do what I want. And they . . . that part I like because it means that I’m trusted that I do a good job. At the same time it would be could to maybe have some response on what you do.
ML: Yeah, like someone to talk to about your ideas and stuff.

E: Yeah, that would be very good.

ML: Okay, last one.

E: If I base my teaching on any didactic theories . . .

ML: Yeah, I don’t know if you have read Bo Lundahl?

E: No I haven’t but I know a little bit about it. What I think . . .

ML: Where do you get your inspiration from? How you work with the books that you work with, where you get your ideas from.

E: I think since I’ve been a teacher for 14 years you try new ideas all the time, I ask myself sometimes “why don’t I just use what I did last year?” but it makes teaching more fun if you try new stuff. And then after a while you realise what works and what doesn’t work and I believe very much in task based learning, that the student understand “why am I doing this?” and that there is like an idea behind “why are we doing this?” so I try to work in a way that that is clear and I try to tell my students “we are doing this because it will lead to this” and I say from the beginning that “we are going to end this with an analysis so why don’t you make little notes you can use” so they understand “okay, it’s going to lead up to this task” and then unfortunately they don’t really make use of what I say in the beginning but [laughs] hopefully someone does and so. But are there other things in that book that I could comment if you tell me what there could possibly be to comment?

ML: Well, the analysis part, I you want to work with just basic language abilities like grammar and vocabulary and reading and understanding or if you want to take it a step further with analysis and then summary and then you can bring in plot and characterisation and stuff like that if you want to make it more advanced. You bring up different tasks, how do you include those things in with the book?
E: Yeah, I think I try to work that way but it is something that comes after time. You realise how you must work in a way. Not that I’m an expert but yes.

ML: You have experience.

E: I have experience, yes.

ML: Alright, the last one then; do feel like the school provides opportunities for capacity building?

E: No. Not at all.

ML: Alright. Have you been to anyone, anything?

E: No, I’ve been to LMS språkdag [language day], it’s for all language teachers . . .

ML: But not from the school itself?

E: No. So it would be very nice [laughs] to get some time, you know, just to, yeah . . .

ML: Yeah, just like you said, to see what other teachers do and get ideas and . . .

E: Yes. It would be good if maybe one . . . if the school said “okay, all English teachers you may sit down today and just look at how you’re working” and . . . yeah. But then of course we could ask for this too. It’s always easier to say that “our leaders, our principles, they don’t really care about what we do” but do we really ask for it? So it’s up to us too and we have to be a little bit self-critical I think.

ML: And have the time for it.

E: And have the time for it! If you’re an English teacher you always have some things to do in the way of correcting something, preparing something, reading something, that’s how it is.

ML: Alright! Well, that was the last one! Thank you!

E: Thank you!
Malin Larsson: So just . . . start at the top! Stating which grade or course of English you teach.

Teacher F: Right. I’m British and I’m 53 and I studied in the UK and I’ve been teaching on and off at different times but most recently the last, since I moved to Sweden, six years at Katedralskolan and I chose this school because I thought it was interesting and it was academically oriented. So to go beyond simply understanding linguistics and literature but also to look at conceptual analysis and that is why I think is why I use so much literature since it works in the third category of how we use language, not to scientifically describe something or even give an aesthetic description but rather how we use it metaphorically, how we use language to represent other things. And that’s why it is interesting to work with the International Baccalaureate, that’s what I work with. And for the books, the novels that I use in my teaching would have been, for example, in the last, let’s say, two years I’ve used novels, short stories, plays, and poetry. At the moment we are doing a module about World War 1 poetry and looking at context and linguistic register with that and I base a lot of literature I choose on the feedback I get from my students, looking at their previous experience with literature and it would be easier if we were watching movies because then they would have so much more experience. So I try and tailor it to some way to their experience and expectations so to start off with which books I use I do choose myself, there are specific lists for different grades but since it’s the IB you are obliged to set up your own
sylabus, to set up your own curriculum and then the IB approves. Quite the same thing doing the English 7 which I started doing, slightly different because of the Cambridge exams that came into that. But at the moment, based on feedback from second and third years, we’re working with the first pages in many novels and plays throughout the last 500 years as a sort of a taste of how the language changed when things moved from a court appearance of when you had the king or queen demanding you compose something to when you had a more parliamentarian or governmental when people [inaudible] personal response, reader response. So at the moment we are working with dystopian novels, fantasy, gothic, graphic texts, plays, poetry and some science fiction. And if you want the actual books of the moment?

ML: Yeah, if you have . . .

F: We’ve been looking at Atwood’s *Handmaids Tale*, Dickens’ *Great Expectations*, some of Shakespeare, Günther Grass’ *The Tin Drum*, [inaudible], *Things Fall Apart* by Achebe, *The Book Thief* by Zusak, Pullman *His Dark Materials*, excerpts from Orwell, 1984 Tolstoy *Anna Karenina* and Eco *The Name of the Rose*, graphic novels with Artemis Fowl, [inaudible], *Cather in the Rye* and *Persepolis* by Satrapi and then looking also at Levi for context *If This is a Man* and *The God of Small Things* Roy, looking at Indian context of literature. That’s what we’re looking at the moment and my thoughts behind my choices when it comes to content are it has to be interesting in terms of language and it has to show conceptual metaphor at some stage and then we work through a variety of activities concerning the text, starting off very creatively as well and working up to, for example, character analysis and its impact on plot.

ML: When you say creatively, do they create something of their own . . . ?

F: They do. They create something. They work with creative writing so they will do pastiche, they will write a different ending or they will look at . . . they will take out a passage and they will insert a new character for example. They will create it as a cartoon strip, they will create
a comic strip or as a cartoon as a satirical novel, they will create it as a play or they will film it. They also make bookmarks based on either, you say here [reading the question] vocabulary work, for example look at adjectives for the module of one novel and then we’ll have some online sites, web sites, as well and we’ll make it and upload all their content and very often they will work with something where they make an exhibition which could be, for example, quotations from the novel or with a graphic novel, particular pictures they think showed a turning point or a change of perspective even something quite simple like you leave out a frame so it becomes a more open type of conversation or dialogue that the characters are having within it. So how layout or how graphics or how visual [inaudible] creates meaning context and culture. So that’s how they work with that. Grammar we work with as it come up because I would say grammar supports literary creativity, not the other way. [Reading the question] I have never had any problems. If I had problems where’s somebody has been bored by chic-lit or [inaudible] prejudice or hasn’t understood Shakespeare so the idea with Shakespeare is just a question of the context of the language and so they start making rap songs or they put it into a musical or they become . . . at the moment we’re doing a Facebook page based on a Shakespearan play and then they compare the language and then of course they see how much richer the language is compared to theirs and then they have to come up with new metaphors. For example “In fair Verona where we lay our scene” became “In fair Verona where squirrels eat popcorn”. They made that into a little cartoon strip and I said “well there are no squirrels in Verona” “yes but now we understand it, now our language is coming alive” and I thought that was interesting actually.

ML: Yeah, it is!

F: But then they completely change the Facebook thing to have Paris being the rich dude coming in a sports car to the cemetery, parking on the grass where he wasn’t allowed to, because he is going against the rules as if he makes them and then Romeo, actually being
quite interesting enough, they really don’t like Romeo. They think the play . . . they retitled the play “Juliette” because why was a 26 year old man doing in a 13 year olds bedroom in the first place, arranged marriages at the time was arranged with all adults being involved, this could have been close to rape, or if not some sort of [inaudible] activity and Romeo was taken out of the title and they make new book covers.

ML: Alright! That’s really cool!

F: That was changing context because in the context of how we think today of what is justifiable behaviour that was not justifiable by any of our ethical understandings then they went through the United Nation’s rules and rights and they saw how many rights Juliette did not have so it was very interesting. So that sort of thing, changing the context is very interesting also perspective. [Reading the next question about being influenced by the school or other teachers].

ML: Actually, considering that you teach IB . . .

F: Not so much, not so much. Everybody started using The Book Thief two years ago, for example. One teacher recommended Angela’s Ashes which I find a very poor type of literature so, sort of an excuse for literature! No, I actually can’t say that but I would say that other schools and other teachers in other schools have influenced me in choices particularly when it comes to using, when they for example make their own books in a poetry project now in English 7 so how . . . they oblige, according to the course plan, about how they would extract information and create knowledge and then understanding, ideally, wisdom from that so they’re going to put a series of quotes together on Wednesday, the two English 7 classes I teach, in the library about childhood because it’s Universal Children’s Day, for example, and then they will look at each other’s quotes and they have to say what is a reliable quotation and what is its context so they will each take each other’s quotes and then find the context where that quotation was made. Somebody has Franklin D. Roosevelt quote, quotation about
childhood but we found out that actually the next sentence of his speech he is, absolutely chocking, denying rights what so ever to children in 1919 so they thought “okay, that’s not a good” . . . because you have to use it in context. That was a bit choking for that young student, but suddenly she understood you cannot take something out of context and believe it, even though it was Google and not Wikipedia. So that works. The central content I believe that the curriculum, well for English 7, is very different from the IB, so the IB is very clear about the content and then you must choose something that shows, for example, if you’re working with dystopian literature you work with neologisms, how we create language to shape a meaning that our political perspectives wants us to understand and then they had an activity where they made posters for an army, for example, and we looked at the history of posters as advertising or how layouts create meaning or colour or anything like this and they made their own posters and then they had to give a presentation about it and they showed the neologisms, the new words they’ve had come up with and they showed how they twisted the meaning slightly. So even the idea of the words “hope” or “progress”, those in themselves seem like positive words one might say, but hope for what? Hope for war or progress in creating evil etc. so they had to, again, put them into a sentence and see “well, we cannot just say that hope is a good thing” because it deters what we are hoping for. So these sort of things work out quite easily, I would say, and let’s see . . . The book is, the novel for example let’s say we have a policy of just, at the moment the way I’m working, we’re either starting with introductions, the first few paragraphs into something and then they work with it they create something else or index, what came before it so it’s an awful lot of discussions and then there’s process writing so in groups they write one concept of how it starts and then rework it two days later and they give that paper to another group and they give their feedback on it or some other ideas and then they go to another group and they write it up as an essay or an idea of an written presentation then they get feedback from me. And then the other way is that the
presentation of the book is I do it in the dark, usually, with candles and they receive a novel from me when they hand in an analytical essay that is their best work, bibliographies, abstracts, anything, so when they have something to hand over they come up one by one and then they are given a novel. And then they have to make bookmarks and we take one, sort of, theme or symbol for example in *The Handmaid’s Tale* there’s a symbol of colour or there’s an idea of flowers, those who nurture but it’s irony because it’s actually those who don’t nurture, in this case how women control the reproduction and their own bodies and the ones that cannot reproduce or are allowed to attend the gardens for that nurturing aspect so it’s a quite a dark sort of theme and then they made bookmarks. And I find it very interesting because I bought in a lot of wallpaper, for example, they cut them up and then they are meant to write something on it or take out an interesting quote from the book and because they invest in this, or some people put feathers on it because Dickens’, Emily Dickens’ says “Hope is a feather” for example, and suddenly they want to bring in something else in there and they are invested in this and sometimes very complicated bookmarks but then they really take care of the bookmark. They may not take care of the book, the novel but the bookmark is very important. We always hang these in the library when it comes to International Book Day so there’s a little forest of hanging bookmarks so that is how it is presented and I tell them nothing.

**ML:** They have to get their own opinion about it?

**F:** Yeah, I tell them nothing because otherwise they can’t be curious. And so they . . . the first thing they do is they read a chapter and they have some deep questions instead of surface questions so “how”. They are not allowed to ask “what” or “why” or “where” so they go into a subjected method when they are just asking “how”. “How did this happen” or “how come she’s over there” or “how . . . “ because “why”, that is not how they start thinking. Because the idea is to start thinking, not knowing in this case. So that works quite well with that. We collaborate sometimes with other English teachers, not so much. Nobody has to approve my
plan that I know of and as long as I have a plan, I suppose, that it has some quality and it
must, of course, produce lots of opportunities for activities that correspond to the course, to be
noticed and marked, obviously.

ML: If we go back to the work with the novel, how do you finish it and how do you examine
it?

F: I examine it in usually, the novel for the moment will be examined in terms of three written
assignments; one very analytical, one that’s works as process writing and another that is hand
written and then there is one speech and one presentation and then there is three activities that
will create one grade around it.

ML: And that’s one book?

F: Yeah, that will be one novel, I can show you [pulls up her laptop] in a moment and you
will have a clearer idea. But . . . didactic theories, I suppose, like everybody else, it’s a
complete mix at the moment. First of all, reader response theory, obviously, so I give them all
a survey and I find out what they’ve done before, this one for example, [pulls out a paper] is a
very basic one where they find out . . . I want some feedback from them and I want to know
which novels they’ve enjoyed and then I give them one of the [inaudible] or the learning . . .
how they learn surveys right at the beginning when we start doing anything where we find out
if they are tactile learners, visual learners, so they understand what they have to work with to
round up their learning . . . spectrum, shall we say, so then we understand very clearly that
somebody who’s absolutely glued to the screen may be missing out at spaceal-learning in a
way or are able to have different perspective of, perhaps, be more engaged. And this is always
the question, to get everybody on board very quickly. So I base a lot of that on my learning
strategies and . . . [reading the question] all of these. Absolutely, all of these. But it’s very . . .
We always have this problem, and what Lundahl mentions as well I believe, should we call it
a learning task, should we learn it you know, an essay, homework, an activity, but what we try
and do is we try and work very actively between . . . it’s very active and, for example, they will never read something by themselves, they are divided into groups and they must act the dialogue and someone else must be the bushes, making the sound effects, so there’s a lot of drama, a lot of theatre techniques come into it and then when they start to film it, for example, then you notice that everybody is awake suddenly because they must perform. Otherwise they absorb. So I do a lot of that, tremendous amount of that actually. Kompetens utveckling [capacity building, reading the question] not particularly literature, I don’t think that there’s much [inaudible], I think people spend a lot of time working with teachers, for example, it’s been quite a lot of time working with articles and newspapers, online articles, authentic materials as such but there’s no tactile emersion in them especially when students have their own computers or they use their cell phones, they never need to touch anything and we have a good 35 % of the students that work best when they have, you know, a piece of paper in their hands or a book. And also the idea of context, they are very . . . I mean, for summer, for example, or even a weekend in April or May here, they are very unlikely to take their computer out in the garden and lie down on a rug but they will take a novel or pieces of poetry so we had a scavenger hunt where I printed out poetry and hid it in various places and then we had 60 students, at least I had 60 students, who went to find it and then they had to read it and then they had to make a picture so the visualisation of conceptual metaphors is very important and that worked very well because they had to do something. They had to compete but if I had just handed them the paper or given them the book nothing will happen so you have to involve the entire learning experience, I believe, not just the creative tasks actually.

**ML:** Learn with the whole body.

**F:** Yeah, just because they’re 16 or 17 doesn’t mean that they shouldn’t be active. They can’t just sit behind a desk for eight hours a day and expect them to be interested in life. Oh, that’s
something else, let me [fiddles with her computer] have a quick look here and I will show you, maybe here, a discussion. For example, with most novels they will get some sort of discussion booklet that I will put together, at the moment we’re talking about free thinking and [inaudible] so they describe themselves as liberal as apart from libertarian so we are looking at how words actually create meaning, or identity in that stage. So they have to, they have to think of what’s the context of the ideas and that’s connected to the idea of stories, creation myths and then we looked at endangerelanguages.com which is a very good website for how any language creates identity and looked at different animated films of creation myths told in a different language completely and then they wrote it down in English what they understood from the pictures and that I found was very interesting because they became totally engaged in it, completely engaged with some things and . . . very interesting site and now I work far more with, if we are looking at Anna Karenina I showed it to them in Russian, the film, and then they can write it down in English and they can discuss it “what does he mean? But no, look at his eyebrow! He’s not serious! But listen to the tone of voice.” So just for ten minutes, I mean, they understood it, they read it but now becomes alive but they . . . we never watch a movie. Never. We watch clips, ten minute clips but nothing else.

ML: Never a whole movie?

F: No. They can watch a whole movie at home, so far as I’m concerned. Very tough [Laughs] I’m sorry! They also, if they want to discuss something, let’s watch something and discuss it, then they watch lots of things. They can show, for example, all this idea about language and how it creates meaning and this is sort of off your literature scale but the idea of literature being stories then I think it’s actually quite useful so let’s see if they have the banana trees [showing me the website she talked about]. This one was interesting, these pictures, they actually did that and they did another one which was the stone men, they became stone and then they had to become humans but the stone men ruined the world and then, you know, the
great creation mad them into wood people because they could bend easily and grow and die and not last forever, that was the meaning, and this provoked tremendous argument then concerning the novel we were reading at the time. More than I had understood what had happened in any sense.

**ML:** I love it when that happens when it just naturally flows on.

**F:** Yes, this is where we want to go with life but, I’m just wondering if there’s any other, something that we are doing at the moment. *Mockingbird* [To Kill a Mockingbird], we are doing that at the moment as well.

**ML:** I know that your colleague handed me a list of books that you have here, do you use some of them sometimes?

**F:** I’m using . . . well, I’ve introduced three and for example if I need to write up something about a novel what I do is I have some sort of plan for each novel and I look at the theory behind it and I look at, for example, differences and student ability and then learning outcomes, can we adapt them, select the materials, the challenges for it, my timeline, my learning outcomes and then I put something in from Skolverket to remind myself exactly why I am choosing this piece of literature and then the assessment projects, how they would work and then how I would work with this, my class structure, and then some project assessment ideas that they could use, some of these we have done, some of them we haven’t and then I’ll do something, I don’t know why this isn’t showing [talking about her computer] anyway, so exactly what I have to do, what they do, in each lesson and I divide them into groups for, you know, chambers tell me sort of thing, where they stand as a group. So they never do something by themselves at all ever, they stand as a group and they say what’s happened in that chapter.

**ML:** Alright, so they don’t read the same chapters, they have to tell each other . . . ?
F: Sometimes they . . . it depends on the composition and how far you are and how well they know each other and until I know that they are really good readers and they are getting a lot out of it because at the moment they all have to read but with two of the novels and a play next term we’ll start, I think in February, where they don’t all have to read it, it will be much closing apt and I think that should work but here I divide them into groups, these are the chapters and then they have certain characters they will follow and then they understand what they have for homework and then this is me what I will show them about and we’ll discuss settings, for example, and then some quotes and etc. And this is where we had creation myths with Milton I think. Oh yes, Islamic creation myths and . . . so all of it works like this throughout each chapter, what they are going to learn, what they are going to do and they also have quizzes, lots of quizzes.

ML: Is this something that you show the students? [Referring to the module she is showing on her computer]

F: Yeah! And then lesson 23, then we will go into fan sites because there are two more books and then I will, lesson 24, have evaluations forms etc. So that’s how it works but because we have so many different abilities, so many very different abilities, I can show you how it works [clicking on her computer] if you take, for example, one novel so if you have a site for it and . . . For example here they will have the links that they will need to work with and they can see the writing assignments, the writing assignments and then the writing assignments for this one and then they take part in terms of quizzes and the things they need to do the setting and then they are going to write something quite academic and analytical about the scientific version because you have to bring in more science into the English 7 course so they will do that for this fantasy novel and they are going to work with charged particles of some kind or solar wind or aurora borealis or the people who are doing literature or more social subjects they will work with creation myths from the Northern peoples or they’ll work with witches or
through history from a European humanist perspective, for example or they’ll work with sagas and fairy tales and stories or they’ll look at pure narrative structure, they can also do the technique as well if they want.

**ML:** Do you teach purely English 7 or do you have English 5 and 6?

**F:** No, just 7. They asked me to organise it a little bit. So then they have, for example, they have shared documents, this will be something that will go up on Wednesday in the library and they can go on to Facebook and then they can go all of this that they put out so they just go in and they add this and then we’ll print it out and then we will stick it up and then they will see something they’ve done as well. They’re also doing paintings of the aurora and they will give those to students in the year below them with their favourite quote from the novel. So that will be happy, I think. And then, as we move along the novels, so I have one of these [referring to the module on her computer] for each novel and then they go into these and they can see other vocabulary, for example, you see a kind of vocabulary site and then each group is responsible for putting up three, four, five or six nouns, verbs or adjectives from each chapter that they think will be relevant and they could use, not something that the author has made up or something that is very, you know, they have to look it up and then . . . that’s what left for the moment. And then there will be something straight forward for vocabulary, creative, that they will need to write something, two pages, using whatever they focus on, three verbs, three nouns and three adjectives taken from here that make sense and then they will have to make poems or lyrics of them as well.

**ML:** A lot of creating.

**F:** Yeah, because then they use it and that can be graded I think as much as something else. And then anything else we use in terms of grammar, we do online only because otherwise it takes a week for them to remember the wrong thing so it’s only online work. But that is how I use one novel, for example.

F: Great!

ML: Thank you!

FF: You are very welcome!